

## **CAPA International Conference on “*Regional Cooperation in TVET for Sustainable Development in Africa*”: Banjul, Gambia; 2 – 8 June 2013**

### ***CAPA and its Activities***

Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) is a grouping of technical and vocational education (TVE) institutions, mostly polytechnics, from various Commonwealth countries in Africa. CAPA was formed on the recommendation of the 7<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Education Ministers Conference held in Accra, Ghana in March 1977. It was envisaged that it would play a role similar to that of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, but with a focus on Africa. CAPA has a membership of about 150 institutions in 17 African countries, and has the main objective of promoting TVET technology transfer and skills development in Africa. CAPA meets twice a year, May/June and November/December, in one of its member countries.

### ***Opening Session of Banjul Conference***

The first 2013 activity of the CAPA, which is an international Conference, opened on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June at the Paradise Suites Hotel in Banjul, The Gambia. Its main theme was: "***Regional Cooperation in TVET for Sustainable Development in Africa.***" This event was organised by CAPA in conjunction with The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), and witnessed active participation by prominent officials of Gambian government. The Opening Address by the minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, was delivered by Fatou Lamin Faye, the minister of Basic and Secondary Education. She opened her speech with the observations that ‘TVET is part of the key strategies to improve individual’s well-being and society’s economic and social development,’ and to derive optimum benefit from this form of education, therefore, deliberate efforts should be made to ensure its access by all, and to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for every member of the society to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of any nation.’

The vice-chancellor of the University of The Gambia (UTG), Prof. Muhammadou Kah, also emphasized the unique position of TVET, in his keynote remark, which was presented by Musa Sowe, a director from the university. He argued that if the MDGs are to be attained, more attention would have to be given to building human capabilities especially those of young people, to increase and enhance Africa's competitiveness and sustainable development. He pointed out that TVET is considered so important that international and regional organisations such as the African Union, United Nations, the African Development Bank,

UNESCO, ILO, ECOWAS and others, have included it on their respective agenda and plans of action. He further stressed the requirement for TVET to help develop professional competencies and occupational skills, so that the workforce produced will be ‘flexible and responsive to the needs of local labour markets, while competing in the global economy.’

He further challenged the participants, by urging them to ponder on “how Africa can compete in the global economy, considering that, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa do not appear on the radar screen of knowledge or technology-driven economies in the global market”. He also suggested that African governments must make the right choices to invest more and better in building local human resource capabilities “to innovate, manage change, and enhance democratic governance to grow its economy and become a serious competitor, but not depend on “aid and handouts.”

Speaking earlier, Abdoulie Loum, director general of GTTI, noted that this is not the first time that The Gambia is cooperating with CAPA to host the event. He recalled that the first International CAPA Conference was held in The Gambia in December 2008 adding that it was also organised by GTTI. "The Gambia became a member of CAPA since its inception in 1977 through the then Vocational Training Centre in Banjul and this was transferred to GTTI when it took over the National Vocational Training Centre from the Directorate of Technical Education and Vocational Training (DTEVT) in 1989.

### ***Proceedings of the Banjul Conference***

The conference featured some 56 technical papers from eight (8) African countries, including The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda. The conference main theme branched into five sub-themes, comprising:

- Challenges of sustainable development in African countries
- Intraregional collaboration for skills development in Africa
- Promoting indigenous technology for sustainable development
- Gender issues in Africa’s sustainable development
- Innovative curriculum development in Africa’s TVET institutions

## ***Key Resolutions of the Conference***

### ***1. Mismatch between TVET training and Employment Market***

There is a mismatch between the knowledge and training imparted on the students and the demand of industry, and this should be addressed by the respective TVET institutions to make their graduates more relevant to the employment market. In this respect, the conference recommends that the institutions should benchmark with industries to update their programmes and incorporate current technological trends in their curricula.

### ***2. Capacity Development of TVET Personnel***

This is also best achieved if TVET institutions continuously develop capacity of their staff to cope with emerging issues of the new technologies, e.g. by continuous training of staff in ICT and use of new equipment; encouraging the use of social media as teaching platform and vehicle for information dissemination; running joint programmes through distance, open, flexible and blended mode; and setting up innovation centres to promote research, generation and incubation of new ideas, products and businesses.

### ***3. Innovation and Technology Incubation***

To promote innovation, governments of the region were urged to increase funding for research into science, technology and innovation that will incubate home grown technology. TVET skills should be prioritized in the respective economies especially among the youth and strengthened through infrastructure and equipment to enable them train more young people for sustainable economic development.

### ***4. Equity, Gender Mainstreaming and Sustainability***

To address equity, gender mainstreaming and sustainability concerns, governments are urged to review the educational systems comprehensively in order to mainstream TVET knowledge and skills. TVET knowledge and skills are required at all levels in the educational system as a backbone for industrialization. There is also need to remove the stigma among parents and students that the TVET track is for those who have failed to join the mainstream educational system. Recommendations are also made to initiate or improve the affirmative action in order to increase female participation in TVET programmes; and come up with the policies for the handling of e-waste.

### ***5. Charge to CAPA***

CAPA Secretariat has been urged to:

- initiate a staff fellowship exchange programme for senior academic and administrative staff for the transfer experience, research and knowledge;
- incorporate in their plan benchmarking activities among member institutions in the areas of curriculum and teaching facilities;
- prepare a database of experts in TVET institutions as a reference for consultancy and sharing of ideas and information; and
- develop capacity to initiate exchange programmes among member institutions to encourage collaborations and linkages between member institutions.

## ***Conclusion***

The topics, as reflected in the attached programme schedule for presentations, provide a very rich harvest of ongoing educational and skills innovations in a cross-section of African continent. Furthermore, the exchange of ideas among the participants has proved very stimulating. A special feature of this CAPA Conference was the keen participation by senior government officials, including the involvement of the education ministers and the Deputy Speaker of the National assembly, Mrs Fatou Baye, who was also a former director-general of GTTI. The Deputy speaker's closing address dwelt extensively on the initiatives of Gambian government in skills development for youth employment.

Special effort was made by the organisers to ensure that delegates had a good taste of the 'Smiling Coast of Africa' by arranging excursions into the *Banjul Island*, to see the historical and commercial areas, as well as a 3-hour boat trip to Juffureh and 'Kunta Kinteh' Island, to retrace Alex Haley's *Roots*' Adventure.

The CAPA Conference for November 2013 is scheduled to be held at Arusha Technical College, Tanzania.

*Report Compiled by Dr M. S. Abubakar, Director, NBTE Centre of Excellence for TVET, the Representative of Executive Secretary, NBTE, at the Conference*

**Annextures:** (1) List of Papers; (2) Communique; (3) Photographs