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Vocational Training in the Informal Sector Report on the BENIN Field Survey

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Foreword

This report is part of a study carried out by the AFD Research Department on vocational training in the informal sector in seven African countries, which are, in alphabetical order, South Africa, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Morocco and Senegal.

The Research Department has defined the methodological and organisational framework of the study and entrusted the scientific and technical responsibility as well as the writing up of all the country reports to Richard Walther. The study has also benefited from the input of the German cooperation (GTZ) in the financing and carrying out of the Ethiopian field survey and that of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGCID) in the financing and carrying out of the Angola field survey. The AFD expresses sincere thanks to these two partners for allowing to broaden the field of investigation to a sample of countries representative of the economic, social, cultural and linguistic diversity of Africa.

The field surveys have been written up in country reports published in English and French, as well as in Portuguese for the Angola report. These reports are downloadable on the AFD website (www.afd.fr, sections «Our Publications » and « Working Papers ») in the following order.

- Working Paper N° 15 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector - Issue Paper.
- Working Paper N° 16 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector – Report on the Morocco Field Survey.
- Working Paper N° 17 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector – Report on the Cameroon Field Survey.
- Working Paper N° 19 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector – Report on the Benin Field Survey.
- Working Paper N° 21 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector – Report on the Senegal Field Survey.
- Working Paper N° 30 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector – Report on the South Africa Field Survey.
- Working Paper N° 34 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector – Report on the Ethiopia Field Survey.
- Working Paper N° 35 : Vocational Training in the Informal Sector – Report on the Angola Field Survey.

The final report, a comparative analysis of all the country reports, is available in English and French in the “Notes and Documents” series (website www.afd.fr, sections «Our Publications » and « Notes and Documents »). It identifies propositions likely to help providers of vocational training in the informal sector but also national authorities and international donors to better orient their actions and investments in the skill development field toward an economic sector that is largely predominant in developing countries.

Disclaimer

The analysis and conclusions of this document are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the official position of the AFD or its partner institutions.

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1. Introduction: Benin – a country focused on skills development in the informal sector

Benin has one of the largest informal economies in sub-Saharan Africa, but is also developing one of the most structured approaches to vocational training for apprentices and craftworkers in this sector. This seemingly paradoxical situation demonstrates that there is no cause-and-effect relationship between the state of the economy and the degree to which vocational training is structured. It shows, to the contrary, that the interaction between production of goods and services and the development of skills and qualifications is complex and depends on a number of factors that must be identified if the informal sector is to be boosted by means of appropriate initial and continuing training policies and practices.

The purpose of this report is to take a close look at Benin's main economic, educational, social, institutional and occupational characteristics with a view to pinpointing weak-

nesses, areas of dependence and trends within the urban and rural micro and small enterprise sector, the labour market, the education and training systems, representative organisations and civil society. It particularly aims to provide as much detail as possible about the positions adopted by the various people interviewed within the public and private sectors during the survey visit and to identify their working relationships and processes, thereby affording a clearer understanding of the joint strategic goals and operational measures they appear to be developing.

Benin undoubtedly stands out from the other countries already surveyed (Morocco and Cameroon) because of the excellent training schemes it is introducing in the informal sector, which are themselves the result of stakeholders' efforts. It is worth exploring the rationale behind these efforts as well as their effects.

1.1 Conduct of the survey

The field survey was carried out from 14 to 21 May 2006, using the same approach as for all of the country reports in the overall study. It entailed meetings with various government officials responsible for vocational training (from the Ministry for Higher Education and Vocational Training, the Ministry for Labour and the Civil Service, and the Ministry for Tourism and Crafts); labour and management organisations (the Benin National Employers' Council and the three largest trade unions); the Benin National Federation of Craftworkers (*Fédération nationale des artisans du Bénin* – FENAB), which represents more than 1,010 associations and nearly 48,000 craftworkers; the Continuing Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Development Fund (*Fonds de développement de la formation professionnelle continue et de l'apprentissage* – FODEFCA), which promotes and

finances training in both the formal and informal sectors; the international technical and financial partners (French cooperation agency, Swisscontact, Danida and the GTZ) which support the various public and private stakeholders; a number of local experts involved in the various existing training schemes and activities; and, lastly, a local craftworkers' collective which has taken on the task of identifying its members' skills and knowledge needs and translating these into training requirements.

The survey focused primarily on the schemes being set up and organised in the area of training and skills development for master craftsmen and apprentices through traditional apprenticeship. These schemes are regarded as models of what can be done throughout the informal sector. However, although they deal with wider issues than just those facing

craftworkers, they cannot be simply replicated in the informal agricultural sector as they stand. Nevertheless, FODEFCA's work in this sector gives some indication of the training activities taking place. Similarly, current discussions on the development of a National Training Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Areas (*Stratégie nationale de formation en milieu agricole et rural* – SNFAR) show that agricul-

ture has its own sectoral approach to the development and funding of research and training. This report takes a look at this approach, although it was not possible to provide specific details. This state of affairs is indicative of both the limitations of the field survey and the priority which public and private stakeholders currently give to ensuring the success of dual apprenticeship schemes.

1.2 The contribution of existing reports and analyses

Unlike Morocco and Cameroon, Benin has not undertaken any national statistical surveys of the informal sector. This makes it difficult to analyse the actual state of the sector in urban and rural areas, particularly regarding the interaction observed in the other two countries between the level of schooling attained and the level of activity and profitability of informal production units (IPUs). The sectoral data available for Benin come from the general population census carried out by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Analysis (Institut national de la statistique et de l'analyse économique – INSAE) in 1997 and the "1-2-3" statistical survey conducted in the economic capitals of seven WAEMU member countries¹. As the latter survey is confined to Cotonou, it gives an indication of the shape of Benin's informal economy only in urban areas.

While the statistical data available are limited, there is considerable documentation relating to the design and development of dual vocational training schemes. This situation is highly indicative of the practices of Beninese officials in this area. They make it a rule to transpose agreements reached through negotiations between the various public and private partners virtually immediately into official

regulations. This approach, which reflects a desire to institutionalise training activities before they have even been tried out, has the effect of setting decisions in stone and thus firmly committing the parties. Conversely, such an institutionalised approach is rather intangible and fragile unless the schemes in question are implemented in both quantitative and qualitative terms, thereby reaching an operational point of no return.

In addition, the field survey afforded an opportunity to collect aggregate data on the country's economic and social situation, the strategy adopted by the craft sector, the latter's occupational structure, the funding of vocational training in both the formal and informal sectors, and the content and forms of delivery of certain training activities aimed at specific urban and rural groups.

Taken together, these data provide a fairly detailed picture of training activities in Benin's informal sector. Nevertheless, the situation covered by the report is changing rapidly given that dual apprenticeships are only in their infancy; the report is as much an outline of what is to come as an accurate review of the existing state of affairs.

¹ STATECO (2005), Méthodes statistiques et économiques pour le développement et la transition, No. 99.

2. The economic and social challenges facing the country

Benin's informal sector is part of a growing economy which is vulnerable to the considerable fluctuations in the price of cotton on the world market, heavy dependence on the trade

policies of its larger neighbour, Nigeria, and considerable poverty, particularly as a result of the weak performance of its food crops.

2.1 A successful economy beset by structural weaknesses

Since the devaluation of the CFA franc (CFAF), Benin's growth rate has been higher than that of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Over the 1994-2003 period, it ranged

from 4.52% to 6%, with an average of 5.32% for the decade (compared with an average of 3.49% for all sub-Saharan African countries).

Table 1. GDP growth in Benin and sub-Saharan Africa (\$ million, constant 2000 prices)

	1980	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
GDP of Benin (\$ million)	1,085	1,662	1,739	1,835	1,948	2,036	2,132	2,255	2,368	2,510	2,650
GDP of sub-Saharan Africa (\$ million)	222,499	269,709	279,970	294,033	304,786	311,785	319,987	330,943	341,810	353,267	367,195
Annual GDP growth in Benin (%)			4.63	5.52	6.16	4.52	4.72	5.77	5.01	6.00	5.58
Annual GDP growth in sub-Saharan Africa (%)			3.80	5.02	3.66	2.30	2.63	3.42	3.28	3.35	3.94

Source: World Bank (2005), *African Development Indicators*, Washington, D.C.

According to the World Bank², much of this growth performance may be attributed to the upturn in private investment since the structural reforms initiated in the early 1990s. The contribution of such investments to GDP increased from less than 5% in the late 1980s to 6.2% in 1994 and almost doubled over the next ten years, reaching 11% in 2003. The overall improvement in factor productivity also appears to have played a part. All of these changes have taken place against a general background of relative political and social stability.

Benin's growth is driven by the service sector (particularly telecommunications), which creates 62% of the nation's wealth, and to a lesser extent by the primary sector, which creates 29%. Recent figures highlight a number of problems as from 2004 (with growth falling to 3%), among other things as a result of certain persistent structural weaknesses besetting Benin's economy.

2.1.1 An economy dependent on the primary sector, particularly cotton

According to the World Bank, cotton accounted for 10% to 15% of GDP and 50% to 80% of total exports between 1994 and 2003. More than a quarter of the population derives its income directly from cotton. This makes economic growth somewhat volatile, as it depends on variations in both world prices and harvest quality from one year to the next. The poor cotton harvest in 2004, for instance, had a direct impact on the country's growth rate. According to the experts interviewed during the survey, Benin could reduce its dependence on world prices by starting up a cotton processing industry, particularly given that the country's craftworkers are genuinely skilled in the art of weaving.

2.1.2 An economy dependent on the trade and customs policies of Nigeria, its main partner country

Benin's economy is greatly affected by its neighbours' trade policies. Although Benin ranks among the world's poorest countries, its geographical position makes it one of Africa's main trading centres. It serves as an ideal transit corridor for goods exported from countries in the Gulf of Guinea to Togo and Nigeria, and the port of Cotonou is an important maritime outlet for the landlocked Sahel countries (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad).

Benin belongs to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and thereby qualifies for the zone's common external tariff, which is designed to harmonise customs tariffs and remove non-tariff barriers. This does not, however, prevent its trade from being heavily focused on Nigeria (not a WAEMU member), which is in fact Benin's leading trading partner. The country's economic health is thus heavily influenced by changes in its neighbour's customs policy, and it suffers the full impact of import restrictions decided unilaterally by Nigeria, as was the case in 2004, when such restrictions were imposed on 44 products originating in Benin. It is also affected by the illicit nature of some of the trade in petroleum products between the two countries, prompting some workers to abandon their production units or food crops to engage in this form of trafficking, which is profitable in the short term and tolerated by the authorities in both countries³. Nevertheless, the overall outlook is positive. The unpredictability of the cotton industry should lead to gradual agricultural diversification, and relations with Nigeria are expected to be normalised in the course of 2006.

2.1.3 An economy characterised by persistent poverty

Benin's growth performance does not appear to have mitigated its persistent poverty problems. About a third of the country's population lives below the national poverty line⁴, and its human development ranking reveals contrasting findings. Although Benin's HDI⁵ is rising overall (up from 0.304 in 1975 to 0.368 in 1990 and 0.431 in 2003), it is still one of the twenty poorest countries, ranking 162nd out of 177 countries in 2003⁶.

This paradox may be explained, among other things, by the persistence of considerable inequality within the country and poor redistribution of the fruits of growth. A study of poverty between 1999-2000 and 2002 shows that the reduction in the proportion of people living below the poverty line (down from 29.3% in 1999-2000 to 28.5% in 2002)

² World Bank (2005), *Benin Investment Climate Assessment*.

³ LARES Economie Régionale (September 2005), "Le trafic illicite des produits pétroliers entre le Bénin et le Nigeria. Vice ou vertu pour l'économie béninoise?"

⁴ 33% according to the UNDP (2005), *World Human Development Report*, Economica, Paris.

⁵ Human Development Index.

⁶ According to the UNDP's 2005 *World Human Development Report*.

Table 2. Change in poverty in Benin from 1999-2000 to 2002 (%)

Environment	1999-2000			2002		
	Incidence ⁷	Depth ⁸	Seriousness ⁹	Incidence	Depth	Seriousness
Urban	23.3	6.9	3	23.6	10.7	6.9
Rural	33	9.4	3.9	31.6	11	5.8
Total	29.3	8.4	3.5	28.5	10.9	6.2

Source: INSAE, 2003 questionnaire on basic welfare indicators¹⁰

did not prevent an increase in overall poverty (up 77% between the two periods), particularly in urban areas. This study also reveals a deterioration in the “depth” of poverty, which increased by 30% between the two periods, indicating that the income of the poor is dropping further and further below the poverty line.

Poverty is a primarily rural problem (with respective deteriorations of 55% and 130% in the depth and seriousness rates) and may be ascribed partly to an agricultural sector that cannot afford to mechanise and thereby ensure significant pro-

ductivity growth. Cities are also increasingly affected, owing to a deteriorating labour market situation and migration.

Benin did however embark on a number of reforms in conjunction with the Bretton Woods institutions in the early 1980s. Being ranked among the least advanced countries, it qualifies for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, reaching the completion point at the end of March 2003; the multilateral debt cancellation process was set in motion at that stage. Under this programme, it also arranged a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) worth

2.2 Efforts to improve the education system

6.19 million SDRs¹¹ (approximately \$9 million) with the IMF in August 2005¹².

In the past, Benin had one of the best – if not the best – education systems in sub-Saharan Africa¹³. In 1952, school pupils accounted for 2.7% of the total population of the country then known as Dahomey (compared with 2% in Senegal and 1.6% in Côte d’Ivoire). In 1990, Benin’s literacy rate was 23.45%, compared with 54% in Côte d’Ivoire and 48% in Senegal. According to Okoko (2005), this decline in educational performance in Benin – once regarded as the Latin Quarter of sub-Saharan Africa¹⁴ – is due to a lack of financial support from the state, gradual deterioration of infrastructure, shortages of classrooms and teachers, and a lack of school supplies.

Current enrolment and literacy indicators for Benin point to significant improvements. According to World Bank data,

the literacy rate rose from 26% in 1990 to 40% in 2002. The gross enrolment ratio in primary education has increased considerably, and since 1998 has exceeded the average

7 The incidence of poverty refers to the proportion of the population living below the poverty line.

8 Depth of poverty is measured by the difference between observed income and consumption levels and the poverty line. This indicator may be used to estimate the additional income required in order to rise above the poverty line, and to measure the degree of inequality within poor populations (definition given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

9 This indicator is calculated by giving a greater weighting to the proportion of individuals living in the households furthest from the poverty line (definition given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

10 Published in UNDP (2005), *Report on the Economic and Social Situation in Benin in 2004*.

11 Special Drawing Rights.

12 PRGF-supported programmes are framed around Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). They are then considered by the Executive Boards of the IMF and World Bank as the basis for concessional lending from each institution and debt relief under the joint HIPC Initiative. International Monetary Fund (2005), “Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility – Factsheet”.

13 Okoko, A. (2005), *Bombe démographique: la menace cachée pour le développement du Bénin*.

14 Expression used by Emmanuel Mounier.

Table 3. Primary school gross enrolment ratio¹⁵ (%)

	Total			Male			Female		
	1990	1998	2001-02 ¹⁶	1990	1998	2001-02	1990	1998	2001-02
Benin	59	83	109	78	100	127	39	65	92
Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa and Nigeria)	64	73	86	72	77	93	59	64	80

Source: World Bank (2005), *African Development Indicators*, Washington, D.C.

NB: This indicator may be higher than 100% owing to grade repetition and early or late admission of some children.

ratio for sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa and Nigeria).

A comparison between these figures and the net enrolment ratio reveals a certain disparity, reflecting either enrolment at a late age or frequent grade repetition.

The available data imply that the improvement in the enrolment ratio among Beninese children has been obtained at the expense of quality; the number of pupils per teacher rose from 53 to 62 between 1998 and 2002, putting Benin

well above the average for sub-Saharan Africa, where the respective figures are 39 and 47 pupils per teacher.

While the INSAE's figures differ from those of the World Bank, they indicate a similar trend. They show a continual improvement in the gross enrolment ratio, which may be attributed primarily to increasing access to the first grade (with the gross admission rate to the first grade rising from 66% to 100% in ten years). These favourable trends must be qualified, however, by a relatively low survival

Table 4. Primary school net enrolment ratio¹⁷ (%)

	Total			Male			Female		
	1990	1995	1999-2002 ¹⁸	1990	1995	1999-2002	1990	1995	1999-2002
Benin		60	71		75	84		44	58
Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa and Nigeria)	49		53	53		57	45		49

Source: World Bank (2005), *African Development Indicators*, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵ The primary school gross enrolment ratio represents the relationship (expressed as a percentage) between the total number of pupils enrolled in primary education, regardless of age, and the official primary school-age population in a given school year. This indicator is widely used to assess the general level of participation in primary education and the education system's capacity to meet the need for such education (UNESCO).

¹⁶ According to the most recent data available.

¹⁷ The net enrolment ratio is the ratio of enrolled children of the official school age for the education level indicated to the total population of that age. Ratios exceeding 100% reflect discrepancies between these two data sets (UNDP, *World Human Development Report 2003*).

¹⁸ According to the most recent data available.

¹⁹ Percentage of primary school pupils reaching fifth grade.

Table 5. Enrolment ratios, 1994-2004 (%)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Gross enrolment ratio	62	65	68	71	75	77	81	85	92	94	96
Gross admission rate to the first grade	66	70	71	79	81	81	87	93	94	99	100
Survival rate	39	43	45	44	49	47	47	45	46	51	50

Source: Social Indicators – The Social Change Observatory, INSAE, 2005 (data updated by DPP/MEPS)²⁰.

rate¹⁹ (50% in 2004) and a high repetition rate (23.62% in 2003).

Benin is sparing no effort to improve its education system. As a signatory to the Declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the country has undertaken to formulate a development strategy in eight key areas, including education. As part of its ten-year plan for education, it

has set itself the goal of providing primary education for all children in the relevant age group by 2015. This is a particularly important goal, since the level of schooling is a factor in boosting the informal sector, and those who complete primary education have a dual advantage in that they are eligible for the vocational skills certificate (*certificat de qualification professionnelle* – CQP) and have a better chance

2.3 A labour market shifting towards the informal sector

of developing more productive, profitable activities in the production and services sectors.

Information available about the overall employment situation in Benin is taken from the joint report by the Ministry for the Plan and the World Bank²¹ and the Ten-Year Development Plan for the Education Sector²². In addition, the World Bank's Investment Climate Assessment²³ contains some figures and analysis relating to the current state of the formal economy, and the "1-2-3" statistical survey conducted in the economic capitals of seven WAEMU member countries²⁴ outlines the findings of a very detailed survey of the informal sector in the city of Cotonou.

2.3.1 A high labour force participation rate as a result of falling unemployment

According to the December 2005 ten-year plan, overall developments in employment are mixed. Benin's total labour force participation rate dropped from 67.7% to 63.8% between 1992 and 2002, while the proportion of self-employed people increased significantly, up from 60.5% in 1992 to 70.2% in 2002.

This trend, combined with a relatively low unemployment rate (0.7% in 2002) which is falling among first-job applicants (down from 1% in 1992 to 0.4% in 2002), reflects the growing shift towards the informal sector within Benin's economy.

In addition, it should be emphasised that Benin's efforts to provide universal access to education and extend the length of schooling have led to a drop in the labour force participation rate among those under the age of 20, down from 63% in 1992 to 49.8% in 2002, and in the proportion of apprentices, which dropped from 7% to 5.2% over the same period.

The major challenge to be overcome is still that of improving productivity, and training and education for producers are among the main means of achieving this. The ten-year plan notes that a large majority of participants in Benin's two main wealth-creating sectors, namely trade and agriculture, are illiterate (74% and 85% respectively). Increased access to literacy and training should therefore have an

²⁰ Table taken from Ministries responsible for Education (2005), *Plan décennal de développement du secteur éducatif, 2006-2015* (Ten-Year Development Plan for the Education Sector, 2006-2015), 30 December.

²¹ Ministry for the Plan, Economic Restructuring and Promotion of Employment and World Bank (2000), *Analyse des secteurs dynamiques de l'économie en matière d'emploi au Bénin*.

²² Ministries responsible for Education (2005), *Plan décennal de développement du secteur éducatif, 2006-2015*.

²³ World Bank (2005), *Benin Investment Climate Assessment*.

²⁴ *Op.cit.*

immediate impact on the country's growth and hence on poverty reduction.

2.3.2 A high labour force participation rate among uneducated children and school dropouts

A high number of children aged 6 to 9 are declared as being economically active. Figures from the General Population and Housing Census (*Recensement général de la popula-*

tion et de l'habitat – RGPH3)²⁵ indicate that 26% of children were working in 2002. This is a primarily rural phenomenon: 81% of working children in this age group live in rural areas, compared with 19% in urban areas. It is more prevalent among girls than boys (55% as against 45%). In 2002, working school-age children represented nearly 49% of the relevant age group.

Overall, 31.6% of children in rural areas work, compared with 14.7% in urban areas. Of these, 99% work in the infor-

Table 6. Labour force participation among children aged 6 to 9 by sex and place of residence

Employment status	Total	Sex		Place of residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
School pupil	484,533	270,336	214,197	206,768	277,765
Working	235,104	105,562	129,542	44,577	190,527
Other non-working	94,845	44,149	50,696	26,088	68,757
Not stated	92,435	42,975	49,460	25,761	66,674
Total	906,917	463,022	443,895	303,194	603,723

Source: INSAE; RGPH3, November 2003²⁶.

mal sector, primarily in agriculture and trade, where they are mainly family workers. Of these child workers, 10% of the sample analysed stated that they were self-employed.

2.3.3 A primarily agricultural and informal labour force

The latest World Bank study estimates Benin's labour force in 2004 at approximately 3.1 million, out of a total population of 8.2 million, while the formal labour market was estimated to

account for 3% of all jobs²⁷. According to the same report, the agricultural sector employed 56% of the labour force, compared with 33% for trade, services and transport and 11% for industry. Although the joint study by the Ministry for the Plan and the World Bank is based on data from the previous decade, it helps to form a clearer picture of the employed labour force. Its analysis of the employment status of Benin's resident population (aged 10 and over) in 1997 highlights the "informal structure" of employment in Benin. The huge proportion

Table 7. Benin's resident population (aged 10 and over) in 1997 by type of employment

	Number	%
Employers	7,554	0.3
Self-employed	1,473,272	59
Permanent employees	88,485	3.54
Temporary employees	41,934	1.68
Cooperatives	4,600	0.18
Family workers	598,410	23.96
Apprentices	175,751	7.04
Other	44,815	1.79
Not stated	62,456	2.5
Total	2,053,128	100

Source: INSAE Volume 1, Estimated results RGPH2²⁸.

²⁵ *Plan décennal, op.cit.*

²⁶ Table taken from Ministries responsible for Education, *Plan décennal, op.cit.*

²⁷ Based on the 1997 labour market studies, it appears that this figure refers to people working in modern enterprises, and does not include civil service employees.

²⁸ Table taken from *Plan décennal, op.cit.*

of self-employed people, followed by that of family workers, indicates that – as in all the other countries – no distinction is made in the unstructured economy between household duties and employment.

According to the ten-year development plan, 97.3% of women and 92.7% of men are employed in the informal sector. It is clear that the employment share of the informal sector is by no means diminishing, since the sector employed 86% of the labour force in 1979 and 92.9% in 1992. Moreover, the report on Benin's national continuing vocational training policy²⁹ states that 36,000 jobs were created each year in the informal sector during this period, equating to an average annual growth rate of 9.8%.

The significant expansion of this sector may be attributed, at least in part, to the structural adjustment policies pursued during the 1990s; the resulting privatisations and civil-service cuts left many Beninese no other choice than to move into the informal economy. The ensuing stagnation in paid employment (approximately 5%) reflects the difficulties faced by the modern sector in taking over from the state in the area of job creation. The informal sector consequently offers the Beninese a means of subsistence, although it consists mainly of casual work in a sluggish economic cli-

mate.

The joint study by the Ministry for the Plan and the World Bank also provides a detailed picture of employment in agriculture and the modern sector.

- While confirming that the agricultural sector is the main provider of employment in Benin (55.9% of the labour force), it shows that agricultural workers are mainly male (68% are men), fairly young (50% are under the age of 30) and underemployed (4.5 hours per working day), with significant income disparities depending on whether they are farming cash crops, (principally cotton), food crops or livestock. Income levels can vary by a factor of 4 to 1 depending on the area concerned.
- As regards the modern sector, excluding the civil service, the breakdown of jobs by sector highlights the overall dominance of the "trade" sector, followed – in terms of the number of jobs available – by transport, services, textiles, and building and public works.

2.3.4 Urban employment: highly informal with a high employment rate and a high female participation rate

The "1-2-3" survey conducted in the economic capitals of

Table 8. Main jobs in each institutional sector in 2001

Main jobs in each institutional sector	Cotonou	WAEMU
Civil service (%)	6.3	6.6
State-owned companies (%)	2.2	1.8
Formal private sector (%)	9.9	14.2
Informal sector (%)	80.3	76.2
Voluntary sector (%)	1.3	1.2
Number of hours worked per week	46.5	47.5
Proportion of salaried employees (%)	24.7	34.6
Multiple job-holding rate (%)	9.2	5.9

Source: WAEMU "1-2-3" surveys 2001-2003; Jumbo April 2005; data from the report by B. Leenhardt (2005), *Le poids de l'informel en UEMOA, premières leçons en termes de comptabilité nationale des enquêtes 1-2-3 de 2001-2003*, AFD Paper.

²⁹ Ministry for the Civil Service, Labour and Administrative Reform (1998), *Politique nationale de formation professionnelle continue*.

seven WAEMU countries gives recent data, comparable across West Africa, on the situation with regard to urban employment, represented in this case by the population of Cotonou.

The available data on the breakdown of jobs by institutional sector confirm the findings of the 1997 survey regarding the dominant role of the informal sector. This sector accounts for more than 80% of jobs in urban areas, a percentage that would undoubtedly be much higher if the agricultural sector were included. This rate exceeds the average of 76.2% for the other WAEMU capitals (only Lomé, the capital of Togo, has a rate higher than that of Cotonou, with the informal sector providing 81% of jobs), and illustrates – as if it were necessary – the unstructured nature of Benin's labour market.

The survey data also give an indication of the size of the formal sector in urban areas and the breakdown of jobs

within its various sub-sectors. Altogether, the formal sector accounts for 18.4% of total employment including the civil service, and 12.1% if it is confined to the formal sector in the economic sense of the term; in the light of the 2005 World Bank data, the formal sector may therefore be said to be primarily urban and largely concentrated in Cotonou.

Cotonou's unemployment rate, according to the ILO definition, is much lower than in the other WAEMU capitals, at 5.5% as against a WAEMU average of 11.4%. It thus confirms the high labour force participation rate mentioned in the ten-year plan. Even the adjusted unemployment rate, which includes discouraged unemployed people, is still below the average rate for the WAEMU capitals, at 25.1% in Cotonou compared with an average of 28.7% for the WAEMU capitals. The main challenge Benin faces, therefore, is not low labour force participation, which would result in a high unemployment rate, but rather underemployment,

Table 9. Cotonou's labour market: labour force participation, unemployment and employment

	Cotonou (2001)	WAEMU
Labour force participation rate (aged 10 and over) (%)	59.9	58.7
Male labour force participation (%)	58.8	65.3
Female labour force participation (%)	60.9	52.5
Number of unemployed (ILO def.) ³⁰	20,400	65,786 (avg.)
Unemployment rate (ILO def.) (%)	5.5	11.4
Broad unemployment rate 1 (%) ³¹	6.8	15.9
Broad unemployment rate 2 (%) ³²	25.1	28.7
Visible underemployment rate (%) ³³	13.4	14.3
Invisible underemployment rate (%) ³⁴	61.1	55.2

Source: WAEMU "1-2-3" surveys 2001-2003; Jumbo April 2005; data from the report by B. Leenhardt (2005), *Le poids de l'informel en UEMOA, premières leçons en termes de comptabilité nationale des enquêtes 1-2-3 de 2001-2003, Thematic Study, AFD.*

³⁰ Unemployed according to the ILO definition: all persons over a specified age (cf. working-age population) who were:

- without work, i.e. were not in paid employment or self-employment during the reference period (one week);

- available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period (two weeks); and

- seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in a recent specified period (the last four weeks or the last twelve months) to find paid employment or self-employment.

³¹ Broad unemployment rate 1: the ratio of unemployed people to the economically active population (in or out of work), applying a wider definition of unemployment by adding to the ILO definition all those out of work who, although they did not seek work during the reference month, would nevertheless be available should they be offered a job (calculation specific to the WAEMU).

³² Broad unemployment rate 2: further expanding the concept of unemployment, it calculates the ratio of unemployed people according to the narrow ILO definition, plus discouraged unemployed people, to the economically active population (in or out of work), while the out-of-work population is extended to include discouraged workers.

³³ Visible underemployment rate: percentage of the labour force obliged to work less than 35 hours a week.

³⁴ Invisible underemployment rate: percentage of the labour force earning less than the local minimum wage (regardless of whether they work more or less than 35 hours a week).

since its invisible underemployment rate – concerning workers whose remuneration is below the low minimum wage, generally reflected in long working hours – is higher than the average for the other WAEMU capitals.

Like many other economic capitals of developing countries, Cotonou has a young population and a high level of migration (38% of its population). The labour force participation rate among people aged 10 and over is 59.9%, with a higher participation rate among women than men (60.9% and 58.8% respectively); Cotonou is unique in this respect, as a higher female participation rate is observed in none of the other six WAEMU capitals.

2.3.5 Employment ensnared by the Nigerian informal economy

The Beninese labour market's shift towards the informal sector is undoubtedly amplified by a number of structural differences between Benin and Nigeria (size and competitiveness of the Nigerian market, the larger neighbour's protectionist policy, monetary disparities) which increase the flow of trade between the two countries, primarily facilitating the illicit trafficking of petroleum products and various consumer goods sold quite openly on the streets of Cotonou. According to the study by the Laboratory for Regional Analysis and Social Research (*Laboratoire*

d'analyse régionale et d'expertise sociale –LARES), “the working of the Beninese economy has never been based on a production policy, but rather on a service policy with an emphasis on trade and speculation”³⁵. If the labour market is to move towards more structured, stable forms of employment, the productive alternatives available in Benin must therefore be developed, focusing primarily on opportunities to create jobs and wealth within the agricultural, industrial, trade and services sectors. Such opportunities were identified by the various people interviewed during the survey. Nevertheless, the fact that the Beninese derive rents from Nigeria draws the labour market towards activities offering an immediate return, preventing the emergence of a genuine strategic vision and making it impossible to develop more stable, skilled jobs.

The available data on the country's economic and social situation provide a contrasting image of Benin. They highlight the potential of a country that possesses natural wealth yet fails to exploit it sufficiently and profitably and fails to avoid the traps of economic and trade dependence on its large neighbour Nigeria. They also point to a society drifting increasingly towards the informal sector despite having a level of labour force participation and school enrolment that should enable it to combat this trend successfully. The infor-

³⁵ LARES Economie régionale (September 2005), *op.cit.*

3. The “institutional” approach to training in the informal sector

mal sector’s ability to organise itself and take responsibility for upgrading its own skills reinforces the image of a country with the ability, if not the determination, to overcome the challenges it faces.

It is clear from the results of the field survey that vocational training in Benin’s informal sector is characterised not only by a reorganisation of the sector that has made the training of craftworkers and apprentices a central concern, but also by a public training policy that

addresses informal production units as well as modern sector firms. Benin has effectively adopted a unified approach to the provision of training and skills development for the various sectors of the structured and the non-structured economy, which is rooted in pro-active collaboration among all the stakeholders – public and private, national and international – to adapt such provision to the country’s development needs.

It is this unified approach, stemming from collaboration

3.1 The organisational dynamics of Benin’s key stakeholders

among all those involved, that has enabled Benin to set in motion a process of reform. The country has achieved in four years what some neighbouring countries have not managed to do over a much longer period.

“The National Lifeblood of the Nation Conference [Conférence nationale des forces vives de la Nation] held in February 1990 enshrined democracy as the political system of Benin. This choice gave an impetus to the activities of a whole range of political, economic and social organisations”³⁶. The informal sector, in particular craftworkers, played their part in these organisational dynamics.

3.1.1 The key organisational role played by the FENAB

Since 1993, Benin’s craftworkers have been organised under the National Craftworkers’ Federation of Benin (*Fédération nationale des Artisans du Bénin* – FENAB), which has established an important local and national network.

For the first few years (1993-96), the FENAB invited individual craftworkers to become members. It later became aware that it should bring together and unify craftworkers’

associations rather than incorporate individual members. By 1996, 112 associations were members of the Federation.

The FENAB then looked at the question of nationwide coverage. With the help of a Swiss development agency, the BAA (*Bureau d’appui aux Artisans*), it set up a coordination and organisational structure covering the local to national levels. This included local collectives, district organisations, a general assembly and a national committee of 15 members. Today the Federation has 1,010 member associations from throughout Benin. These associations have from 25 to 500 members each. They are divided into 11 occupational branches, and include 80 local collectives (one in each of the 77 local districts, four of which are in Cotonou), representing a total of 47,680 craftworkers.

The FENAB has focused its work on vocational training, and has set up training committees at each level of the

³⁶ Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2006), A. Gauron and C. Davodum, *Rapport d’évaluation finale du projet de coopération avec le Bénin d’appui aux formations techniques et professionnelles (PAFTP)*.

organisation. It identifies the craftworkers’ skills needs and translates them into demand for both initial and continuing training (for youth apprenticeship, master craftsmen and craftworkers’ associations).

The Ministry for Culture, Crafts and Tourism decided to give an extra impetus to the craftworkers’ organisational dynamics and in December 2005 published an order establishing a consultation framework entitled the Partnership Table (*Table de partenariat*). The three main partners in this process are the public authorities, support structures and craftworkers’ sector bodies. The aim is to improve collaboration among them and to develop synergies at local level.

3.1.2 The government’s regulatory action

While the FENAB has played a key role in organising the informal sector, it works within an institutional framework that has both supported and regulated this organisation.

In 1994, the government launched a programme to boost the private sector. This included a number of initiatives concerning the craft sector, including the creation of inter-regional craft guilds (*Chambres interdépartementales de métiers – CIM*), the drafting of guidelines for the development of micro-businesses and craft enterprises, and the consolidation and expansion of support for micro-enterprises in urban and rural areas³⁷. The creation of the craft guilds was enacted into law by Decree 2003-557 of 24 December 2003. There are three of them in existence today, at Atocora-Donga, Borgou Alibori and Collines-Zou. A legal framework to regulate the craft sector was established by Act 98-037 of 22 November 2001. This defines the statuses of craftworkers (master, apprentice and worker), lists the sectors of craft activities organised in the informal sector and lays down the requirements for opening and running craft enterprises.

3.1.3 Social partner responsibilities in the informal sector

A particular characteristic of Benin is that the informal sector comes under the responsibility of the social partners. The Preamble of the Collective Agreement on Employment, which applies to all companies in Benin³⁸, states that organisations representing the country’s employers and workers must work “towards developing economic production and the fair distribution of national income” and improving wor-

kers’ living standards and working conditions, in particular “through the reorganisation and development of vocational training”. Workers in the informal sector are covered by this agreement in the same way as formal enterprises.

The responsibilities of employers and trade unions with regard to vocational training in the informal sector are embodied in the role given to them under the Continuing Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Development Fund (FODEFCA). Through its tripartite management committee, employers and trade unions are responsible, in conjunction with the public authorities, for promoting, assessing, selecting and funding skills development and training initiatives for those in employment, as well as dual training and apprenticeship training, which primarily concern the informal sector. Another of their tasks under the Fund is to assist businesses, craftworkers and those working in the modern and informal sectors of the economy, whether they are members of professional organisations or not, in identifying their training and skills development needs and drawing up training plans and programmes.

An agreement signed in October 2005 between the Benin National Employers’ Council (*Conseil national du patronat du Bénin – CNPB*), the FENAB and the three main trade union organisations (*Confédération des syndicats autonomes – CSA*, *Confédération des syndicats des travailleurs du Bénin – CSTB*, and *Union nationale des syndicats des travailleurs du Bénin – UNSTB*) has boosted the social partners’ determination to promote comprehensive access to lifelong learning.

It is this coordinated involvement of the political, economic, social and professional stakeholders in organising and developing the informal sector, and in particular in helping

³⁷ Ministry for Culture, Crafts and Tourism, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2005), *Déclaration de politique nationale de développement de l’artisanat*.

³⁸ Quoted by the Ministry for Public Affairs, Employment and Administrative Reform (1998), *Politique nationale de formation continue*.

3.2 A broad, unified approach to reform

craftworkers’ organisations to express their own training needs, that explains why Benin has – in contrast to the other countries covered by our survey – adopted an institutional approach to vocational training in the informal sector. In parallel to the organisational dynamics of the informal sector, public policies on vocational training for both sectors of the economy have also been carefully crafted. The specific feature of Benin is that it has taken a broad approach to skills development, addressing all those who play a role in the economy. The way in which craftworkers have taken responsibility for addressing their own training needs and the role given to the social partners go a long way to explaining this approach. As a result, the current reforms concerning training provision in the craft sector are inducing a shake-up of the entire formal training system.

3.2.1 The major phases in an integrated policy for vocational training

The present education and training system dates from the period of democratic renewal in the 1990s. It is the latest in a series of developments, from the “new school” of the revolutionary government (1974–89), which was a successor to the “post-independence school” inspired by the French model (1962–74)³⁹. The present system evolved out of a major conference on education held in October 1990 and a roundtable of Benin’s economic and social development partners, held in Geneva in April 1992. As well as defining educational goals, the roundtable identified the need for a strong institutional framework to support the measures to be introduced, and the need to develop technical and vocational training, to develop and rationalise non-formal education, and to improve literacy rates. The informal sector was thus included among the priorities right from the start.

Under this broad strategy, the country introduced a demand-driven continuing training system in 1995. In December 1998 it adopted a national vocational training policy, which sets out to provide employment training for young people and, in particular, to improve and develop the traditional apprenticeship system with a view to integrating it into an overall vocational and job training system. The policy comprises a detailed analysis of the different econo-

mic sectors, and emphasises the dominance and weight of informal activity in Benin’s economy as a whole. It states that continuing vocational training must work towards upgrading the skills of economic players so that they can make the most from their activities. The national policy also includes measures to combat unemployment, underemployment and poverty, through the quantitative and qualitative development of productive jobs.

At the end of 1998, the Directorate of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (*Direction des enseignements technique et professionnel* – DETP), with the help of the German technical cooperation agency GTZ, started to look at how it could revise its policy. This led to the publication of a Policy and Guidelines Paper on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform at the end of 2001, which was approved by the Council of Ministers, and to the creation of the Ministry for TVET, as well as the development of an action plan which is still in operation. Continuing training and apprenticeship have been given a prime role, and consequently the DETP has been divided into two separate directorates, one dealing with technical education (the DET) with responsibility for training establishments, and one dealing with vocational training and skills development (the DFQP), which is in charge of continuing training and apprenticeship.

In early 1999, a decree approving FODEFCA’s statutes introduced a system for collecting and allocating resources. This validates the single approach to the development of training in the formal and informal sectors, through the objectives which it sets out, which are: to fund continuing training and apprenticeship schemes, to support enterprises, craftworkers and all those working in both the modern and the informal sector, and to support those providing training in the economy as a whole. Although FODEF-

³⁹ Most of the information on the reform of vocational training comes from the photocopied document *L’enseignement technique et la formation professionnelle au Bénin*, from the document *Politique nationale de formation continue*, *op.cit.*, and from the *Rapport d’évaluation finale du projet de coopération avec le Bénin d’appui aux formations techniques et professionnelles (PAFTP)* written by André Gauron and Cyr Davodum in January 2000 on behalf of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

CA is funded by an annual grant and not, as most of the economic and social partners would have liked, directly from the apprenticeship tax – which would have had the advantage of making its funding more permanent – it has enhanced the credibility of the new policy guidelines by providing them with limited but real means for their implementation. The share of the FODEFCA's resources allocated to training initiatives has progressively increased from 25% in 2002 (the first year of the fund's operation) to 43% in 2003, to 59% in 2004 and to 70% in 2005. Despite the withdrawal of the World Bank, which was a major contributor to the Fund up until 2005, it would appear, that resources dedicated to training will continue to increase.

After the 2006 presidential election and the constitution of a new government, the Ministry for TVET had been transformed into the Ministry for Higher Education and Vocational Training. This field survey took place just as the new ministry's sphere of responsibilities was being defined. A number of those met were concerned as to the priorities and means that would be allocated to vocational training, in comparison to the attention that would inevitably be given to the university sector.

3.2.2 The current reform of technical and vocational education and training

Vocational training in Benin is undergoing a reform which was defined in the 2001 Policy and Guidelines Document and also in the action plan on the reform's detailed implementation. The reform's main objectives are to make TVET more responsive to the real needs of the labour market, the introduction of dual apprenticeship schemes in the TVET system, and the broadening of TVET provision in the continuing vocational training field.

Making TVET more responsive to labour market needs⁴⁰

There are 15 public technical education colleges in Benin, which in 2003/2004 educated 10,984 students, and 112 private colleges, which educated 17,400 students in the same year. The private colleges focus mainly on the service sector, whereas the public colleges offer scientific and technical training courses in the fields of industry, public administration, agriculture, biology and social services. The first phase takes in children who have completed the second year of secondary education (aged 12-13 years) and pre-

pares them mainly for the Vocational Training Diploma (*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle – CAP*). The second phase takes in pupils who have passed the school-leaving examination taken normally at the age of 16 (*brevet d'études du premier cycle – BEPC*) and prepares them for various technical diplomas but also in some cases for the higher level school-leaving certificate, taken normally at the age of 18 (*baccalauréat G*).

A mismatch was observed between the training provided and the needs of the labour market, in particular with regard to new occupations for which no training is available. Another problem was the lack of practical training to complement classroom learning. These among other things were at the origin of the reform's guidelines. The reform plans to make initial training more responsive to the needs of the workplace and to introduce new training courses for the new sectors that have high employment potential. It also plans to widen the scope of the public TVET establishments (a constitutional bylaw to give them greater autonomy is under discussion).

During the field survey we met a number of principals of these establishments, and it was clear that they hoped the reform would lead to a close partnership between training colleges, businesses, and the craft sector and to a real dual learning approach to TVET as a whole.

The action plan for the introduction of dual apprenticeship

Apprenticeship remains the most highly developed form of training in Benin. In 2005, an estimated 200,000 young apprentices were trained (150,000 in 1998, ten times the numbers in technical and vocational training). Apprenticeship is geared in particular towards school dropouts and young people facing barriers when it comes to accessing formal training. It mainly covers occupations in the craft sector, where it plays a key role since – until the TVET reform – apprenticeship was the only form of training for this large number of young people. Given Benin's socio-demographic situation – 45.8% of the population is under 14 – this role was particularly important. Regulated by a tri-

⁴⁰ Data on TVET are taken from the *Rapport d'évaluation finale du PAFTP, op.cit.*; from the report *Description du système actuel de l'ETFP au Bénin*, by M. Houndjenou, dated 17 August 2000; and from the *Plan d'action pour la mise en œuvre de la réforme de l'ETFP*.

partite written contract or verbal agreement between the employer, the apprentice and the apprentice's family, and on a paid basis, the apprenticeship is equivalent to on-the-job learning through daily repetition of production tasks.

Under the 2001 reform, the apprenticeship system has evolved towards dual apprenticeship, in which business and the government share responsibility for training, via the training colleges. The field survey observed that, for the first time in 2006, 292 apprentices had obtained the national Vocational Skills Certificate (*Certificat de qualification professionnelle* – CQP). Introduced in 2005, the CQP is awarded after a training course split between classroom learning (600 hours) and work experience in a company or with a master craftsman. It attests to a level of practical and theoretical skills corresponding to that of a qualified worker.

The reform will also introduce an Occupational Skills Certificate (*Certificat de qualification au métier* – CQM). This will attest to practical and occupational skills acquired by apprentices or craftworkers, and will be awarded jointly by the government and the National Craftworkers' Federation. It is intended in the long term that this CQM will replace the Completion Certificate (*Certificat de libération*) used up until now in the craft sector.

The reform also plans to create a basic skills development scheme for those who fail to complete primary education. This is intended to enable youngsters to validate a certain level of schooling and if possible to complete it, thus enabling them to enter the dual apprenticeship system with a good chance of reaching CQP level.

Broadening continuing training provision

Continuing vocational training is still relatively underdeveloped in Benin, due to a lack of expertise in the organisations that should be active in this field of training, the absence of studies on continuing training needs, the mismatch between the existing initial training programmes and current learning needs, and constraints on the delivery of continuing training. Until 2004 there were no advisers on continuing training and apprenticeship capable of matching skills requirements with the opportunities offered by training centres, trainers and funding sources.

In the modern sector, funding for continuing training is available through the FODEFCA. However, this funding would appear to provide insufficient incentives or be insufficiently

accessible, since the World Bank's *Benin Investment Climate Assessment*⁴¹ indicates that only 17.6% of Benin's company's provided any external training for their employees in 2004, compared to 27.8% in Mali (in 2004), 32.3% in Senegal (in 2004) and 78.2% in Nigeria (in 2001). The current reform includes plans for the public training colleges to increase their capacities in terms both of the numbers of students they can accept and the numbers of trainers who specialise as continuing training advisers. In October 2005, an agreement was signed between the social partners to improve workers' access to continuing vocational training schemes in the framework of agreed company training plans. It also puts the spotlight on the modern sector which, while it had not been forgotten, appeared to be the poor relation in terms of existing training provision. The modern sector also suffers from its weakness and a low level of state intervention.

In the informal sector, in particular the craft sector, plans to introduce the CQP include prior continuing training for the master craftsmen who will become involved in the initiative. The introduction of the CQM and the establishment of Occupational Development Centres (*Centres des métiers* – CMs) as provided for by the reform should significantly increase craftworkers' access to training. By giving this boost to TVET, the ten-year action plan anticipates an estimated 15,000 craftworkers taking the CQM.

Aside the CQP and CQM, continuing training for craftworkers is also available, with FODEFCA or NGO funding, in areas such as business management, accounting, upgrading of technical skills, functional literacy, etc. It is one of the priorities defined by the FENAB for all of its member associations and collectives.

At a meeting with the Porto Novo craftworkers' collective, it was clear that there was a strong demand on the part of craftworkers for regular training to enable them to keep up with technological developments and thus gain access to new product and service markets.

Throughout the field survey's meetings with the various public authorities as well as economic and social partners, it was clear that dual apprenticeship was at the heart of the

⁴¹ *Op.cit.*

reform of TVET. This is helping to ensure that initial and continuing training will be re-focused on the notion of “qualified and acknowledged professionals” introduced by the CQP.

3.2.3 The structuring role of funding agencies in the reform process

The whole process of designing an integrated vocational training policy and implementing the reform process has been supported by the various funding agencies who have worked together in close coordination. A consultation framework set up under the aegis of the TVET system has enabled the various international technical and financial partners to work in synergy with one another concerning the development of the current vocational training system.

- Since the early 1990s, Swiss development aid (through the BAA) has positioned itself as a service provider helping to promote and develop of the craft sector. It has worked with the FENAB to develop training initiatives targeting underprivileged craftworkers in particular.
- The Hans Seidel Foundation, a German agency, began its activities in 1992. It initiated dual apprenticeship in Benin, and has built a vocational training centre for this purpose. Insufficient methodological and institutional support has however meant that it has been unable to expand its activities, and had to withdraw from Benin in 2003.
- GTZ came to Benin in 1999 as part of an €800,000 programme which ended in June 2006. It contributed to the reform of technical and vocational training which was finalised in the Policy and Guidelines Paper on TVET Reform adopted by the government in March 2001. It runs and funds a project to promote craft enterprises and SMEs (*Projet de promotion de l'artisanat et de la petite et moyenne entreprise – PPA*) in 55 of Benin's 77 local districts. The project aims to encourage local collectives to analyse their own training needs, draw up a formal training needs plan, and negotiate training content and modules directly with training providers. The FENAB is one of the partners in this project.
- Swisscontact began its activities in 2003 with a two-phase initiative scheduled to run until 2008 with an annual budget of CHF 500,000 (just over €315,000⁴²). Its aim was to work together with craftworkers' sector

bodies, mainly with the FENAB, in developing vocational training through apprenticeship and skills development for craftworkers. Swisscontact and the FENAB played a major role in introducing the CQP by quickly launching a number of dual training courses. This national certificate is based on traditional apprenticeship but has been structured to include classroom-based and practical training.

- An agreement was signed in 2002 with the French development aid authorities on a Franco-Benin technical and vocational training project (*Projet de coopération avec le Bénin d'appui aux formations techniques et professionnelle – PAFTP*). The project is scheduled to run for 36 months and has a budget of €1.2 million, not including technical assistance. The aim is to introduce training courses leading to the CQP in the areas of construction and electricity. The project did all the design and development work for the CQP and the CQM and ensured that all those involved have mastered the methodology, as well as working on the regulatory aspects (decrees, orders). The PAFTP, which works in very close collaboration with the Ministry for Technical Education and the Ministry for Public Administration, Employment and Administrative Reform, effectively spearheaded the initiative to develop the CQP and the CQM, coordinating the activities of the different partners such as GTZ and Swisscontact. Another strand of the project provides support to the institutions responsible for coordinating continuing training and apprenticeship, i.e. the FODEFCA, the Employment and Vocational Training Observatory, and other ministerial departments.
- The Danish cooperation agency, DANIDA, has focused its efforts primarily on educational projects (€12 million over three years). Following the adoption of the CQP, however, it decided to invest in the building, equipping and management of an Occupational Development Centre and to allocate a total of €4.1 million to the development of the CQP. It is possible that DANIDA will take over and carry on the PAFTP project, which is coming to

⁴² As of 1 May 2006, €1 = CHF 1.5814.

an end.

These technical and financial partners, and others including the Belgian development agency (the CTB), the ILO, UNDP and the NGO BORNEfonden, all work in close collaboration with the various ministries concerned and with FODEFCA. All share the same vision of the training priorities and provisions to be developed for the informal sector, and all emphasise the vital role of partnership with sector bodies, in particular the FENAB, in stimulating the informal sector’s development.

3.2.4 The vital role of coordinated management in the reform

The successful introduction of the reforms, in particular that of the traditional system of apprenticeship, into the existing training system, is due to a winning combination of the organisational dynamics of the key players in Benin, the fact that training targets all the economic stakeholders, and the consultation framework set up to include the external technical and financial partners. According to the various partners met, notably the French and Swiss technical assistance providers, this would not have been possible without the establishment of a coordinated management process involving all those concerned. This process comprises two important aspects.

A rigorous approach

This consisted in anticipating all the various aspects of the reform and transcribing them in such a way that the terms relating to the measures or provisions to be implemented were known to and accepted by all those involved. This called for an overall constitutional bylaw, together with a set of governmental decrees and orders concerning its detailed application. For example, the introduction of dual apprenticeship in Benin gave rise to a series of regulatory instruments setting out the main measures:

- Decree 2005-117 on the certification of vocational skills through apprenticeship,
- Decree 2005-118 setting out guidelines for the introduction of a system of dual apprenticeship in technical and vocational education and training in Benin,
- Order 2005/363 of the Ministry for Culture, Crafts and Tourism on the organisation of apprenticeship in the craft sector in Benin,
- Order 2006-0012 of the Ministry for Technical and

Vocational Education and Training setting out evaluation methods for awarding the CQP,

- The model contract for dual apprenticeship, issued by the Ministry for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, the Ministry for Culture, Crafts and Tourism, and the FENAB.

Although this whole legal framework may appear complex and demanding, the general opinion was that it was the only way to ensure that the reforms concerned would be perpetuated in the long term.

Involvement of national, international and local stakeholders

The rigour applied in the regulatory approach was coupled with the close involvement of the different stakeholders concerned in the process.

The first and indispensable link in the chain is inter-ministerial consultation. According to an official source, the effect of this consultation has been to reduce to a length of nine months the legislative and regulatory process which in Africa usually requires a minimum of five years.

The second link is the involvement of all the national stakeholders in the decision-making process. It would be unthinkable in Benin to introduce any new measure that had not received the assent of the FENAB or of employers’ and trade union representatives. The FODEFCA’s statutes even make tripartite consultation a prerequisite for the selection and funding of requests for training from formal and informal enterprises.

The third and final link concerns the vital role played by the local craftworkers’ collectives. Without their agreement, from the start, and their active participation in the implementation of the agreed measures, there is little chance that things will go further than the experimental stage and achieve actual implementation. According to the principals of the establishments responsible for introducing the theoretical training in the CQP programmes, the motivation of craftworkers at local level is indispensable if the measures set out in the legislation and decrees are to be achieved.

The whole of this coordinated management process comes under sub-point 1 (Improvement of the institutional, legal and financial frameworks of TVET) of the Action Plan for the Implementation of TVET Reform drawn up by the Ministry for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. It has led to the effective involvement of all those concerned by the imple-

4. Dual training in the informal sector: an innovation with roll-out potential

mentation of the reform. As a result, the CQP training initiative has been formally embedded at the heart of the future vocational training system and was first implemented successfully in 2006. Whether this measure reaches really becomes irre-

versible will be decisive for the future of the reform.

Analyses of the country's economic and social situation, and of the institutional and partnership approaches adopted with regard to training shows that the public authorities and

4.1 Initial assumptions: stimulating existing provision by transforming it

the national and international partners involved in TVET reform attach particular importance to the way in which the reform can be used to stimulate the craft sector and the activities of all those working in the non-structured economy⁴³.

During the field survey, it was possible to observe that the various stakeholders in the area of training were well aware of the many challenges facing them. These include skills development to help get people into jobs, social integration, fostering social stability and economic efficiency, and responding to the urgent need for better skills and qualifications but at the same time building a training system that is viable and sustainable in the medium and long terms. This search for a balance between needs and contrasting situations is a kind of virtuous circle in terms of the training initiatives being taken in Benin.

4.1.1 Training boosts integration and output

The decision to focus on the informal sector was primarily based on the reform's proponents' identification of problems relating to integration in employment and society. The informal sector occupies the vast majority of Benin's labour force. For most of the young people leaving the education system, it offers the only means by which they can enter the labour market. For more than 150,000 of them, it offers the opportunity for an apprenticeship that guarantees them future employment and integration into the economi-

cally active population. And for many school dropouts, it is the only way to get off the street or out of unemployment and into the working world. In the craft and agricultural sectors, for the vast majority of the active population, training represents the only opportunity to upgrade employment skills and keep up with technological developments and market trends, thus putting their social integration and career path on a more secure footing.

For the proponents of the reform, its focus on the informal sector also has an economic aspect. As the sector is largely dominated by domestic employment, it is a question of helping the very large majority of the population that works in the informal sector to increase their production and be able to purchase the goods and services they need to subsist. Investing in the skills development of those working in the sector will therefore better arm them to combat poverty and facilitate the shift from a subsistence economy to one of growth and development. Field surveys and statistical

⁴³ Data on the situation and trends with regard to dual apprenticeship owe much to Ludovic Khamchane, leader of the Franco-Benin project providing assistance for technical and vocational training schemes, who provided all the relevant documentation and the descriptions of the various schemes described in this section. He deserves warm thanks for his help.

studies alike have shown that the higher the levels of education and skills among those working, the more likely their activities are to be profitable, both for the workers themselves and in terms of their contribution to the production of national wealth.

On this last point it has not been possible, as in other countries surveyed, to obtain an objective assessment of the contribution made by Benin's informal sector to the country's gross domestic product. However, given that the primary and services sectors, in which informal activity is predominant, produced 85.6% of national wealth in 2003⁴⁴, it is possible to extrapolate these results and conclude that the non-structured economy in Benin represents at least 50% of GDP, ranking Benin high among the countries surveyed. All of these data highlight that informal sector training is a key strategic challenge for Benin. Raising the skills level of those who enter and work in this sector will not only enhance the level of skills of 95% of Benin's active population, but also allow the whole country to benefit from the increase in wealth that is more than likely to result. It is also an opportunity to make new ways of working more widespread, promote subcontracting, waged employment and groupings of companies to work together on large-scale projects.

4.1.2 Innovating and organising traditional apprenticeship

In comparison with the other countries surveyed, Benin has clearly built up an exemplary vocational training system for the informal sector, comprising the CQP Vocational Skills Certificate, which is currently being introduced, and the planned CQM Occupational Skills Certificate. These are based on the following principles:

- Recognition of the role and contribution of traditional apprenticeship and in particular the practical skills it

develops.

- A gradual evolution of this apprenticeship towards a policy that acknowledges the value of the existing set-up (the apprentice receives training from a master craftsman which is recognised and assessed as part of a national certificate) and a move away from repetitive tasks thanks to the addition of practical and/or classroom-based training adapted to new technologies and new practices in sales and management.
- The new scheme is to be officially and explicitly included among the responsibilities of existing training colleges. This should have the effect of instigating a renewal of the whole training system (design and development of learning materials, training and assessment methods, teacher training, facilities, role and place of technical certificates, etc.).
- The use of a skills-based approach in the development of this training system. It would seem that this approach has been accepted and taken on board by all those involved in the process.
- Joint management of the system as a whole, within a consultation and coordination framework bringing together the different social and economic partners and those involved in vocational training, and establishing a special relationship with craftworkers' sector bodies, in particular the FENAB.

The practical application of these principles in a system that is both experimental and established is a unique feature of Benin's training policy. An innovation does not usually become established until after a duly validated experimental phase. In Benin, innovation and regulation have gone hand in hand, thanks to a management and coordination process involving all the stakeholders and drawing on prior consensus among all those concerned

4.2 Key features of the dual apprenticeship system

on the reforms to be introduced. Benin is unique in having succeeded in reconciling the introduction of a new system and its immediate institutionalisation in a first step that has unanimous support: the introduction of the CQP Vocational Skills Certificate.

As indicated above, the introduction of dual apprenticeship

is not the only component of the reform process begun in 2001. However, all those we met during the survey emphasised that the introduction of the CQP was not only the first concrete step in the reform process, but also the reference

⁴⁴ LARES Economie régionale (September 2005), *op.cit.*

point for the organisation of all the other initiatives. The representative of the National Employers' Council, for example, clearly stated that companies in the modern sector would more readily take on a young apprentice who had obtained a CQP (whose skills would be better adapted to the firm's needs) than a young person with a CAP Vocational Training Diploma since, wherever they came from, the company would have to retrain them. The heads and principals of training schools and centres interviewed during the field survey were also clearly in favour of extending the principle of dual training introduced by the CQP to the whole TVET system.

4.2.1 A cornerstone: the CQP Vocational Skills Certificate

The dual apprenticeship which the current reform is aiming to achieve is built up around a coherent set of measures, including the CQP, the CQM, Occupational Development Centres (Centre des métiers – CMs), vocational training centres, and pre-vocational skills training for young school dropouts. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all of these measures have been detailed in a number of regulatory instruments (decrees and orders). The fact that 292 apprentices obtained the CQP for the first time in 2006, and that the other training measures have not yet been brought into operation, means that the CQP – a national certificate attesting to the level of skilled worker – has in fact become the cornerstone of the whole set of measures still being built up. The finalisation of the CQP's curriculum has also strengthened the role and place of the Ministry for Vocational Training, which has been recognised as having ultimate responsibility, in conjunction with all the partners involved, for the introduction of dual apprenticeship and more broadly for the organisation of such training in accordance with the skills-based and dual approaches.

What is the CQP?

The CQP is aimed primarily at apprentices aged over 14 who have achieved an educational level at least equivalent to the last year of primary school. It combines job training with a craft worker and classroom learning at a training centre. The course at the training centre consists of three 200-hour phases, in subjects such as technology, applied

mathematics, technical drawing, basic French language, general knowledge and business management. The apprentice attends the training centre once a week and spends the remaining five days working with his or her master trainer. The training course usually last for three years, but can be taken in two years. The training is jointly managed by the employer's sector body and the training centre. At the end of the three cycles, the student takes the national CQP examination, which attests to a skills level equivalent to that of a skilled worker. Skills assessment takes place in two steps: continuous assessment at the training centre and at the workplace, and the more traditional national examination consisting of both practical and theory tests.

Design and delivery of the CQP

The CQP has been designed and developed within an overall framework by the Schools Inspectorate and Technological Innovation Directorate (*Direction de l'Inspection pédagogique et de l'Innovation technologique – DIPIT*) of the Ministry for Vocational Training, working in close conjunction with international aid projects and agencies, in particular the French PAFTP project and Swisscontact. It also falls in line with the preparation of a directory of occupations in the craft sector, proposed by the National Statistics Institute (with the support of the BAA) and approved in 2003 by Decree 2003-569. It consists of a skills-based approach, and includes the drawing up of job descriptions and portfolios of activities and skills. The assessment method, set out in the Ministerial Order 0012 of 2006, establishes a balance both between theory and practical tests (30% and 70% respectively) and between continuous assessment and examinations (60% and 40%). Lastly, as well as the usual training given by trainers at the centre (teaching staff) some training is provided by local or business trainers. These are recognised master craftsmen, selected by their association, who make their classroom contribution alongside the trainers. They also help illiterate apprentice trainers (often master craftsmen) to fill out the apprentices' report books and help the apprentices to adapt into French what the master craftsman has conveyed to them, often in one of the many local languages spoken in Benin. The local trainers act as a relay between the craft-

worker, the professional association and the training centre. Like the teaching staff at the centre, they have been trained to use the CQP methods and materials and, for all classes, receive support and payment from Swisscontact. The first CQP classes funded by the colleges were opened in 2006.

Future development of the CQP for apprentices

There are 1,500 apprentices currently following the three training cycles, and a first-year intake of 700 new apprentices is expected during the year. The target of the reform is to train up to 3,000 apprentices a year, by making the most of the existing resources within colleges (with the support of teaching teams and input of expertise from the Directorate of Technical Education), by building in addition to the existing high schools, vocational skills training centres specifically geared to the CQP, and by extending the five CQPs that have been approved so far (masonry, electricity for the building industry, plumbing, refitting, cycle maintenance) and the four CQPs in the process of being approved (carpentry, refrigeration and air-conditioning, clothes-making and design, and hairdressing) to a further ten or more. These further CQPs would be developed after research into labour market opportunities (car mechanics, metalworking, TV and radio repair, food processing, etc.).

This further development also implies finding solutions to a series of difficulties listed by the high school principals interviewed, i.e.:

- Lack of financial resources: families and craftworkers often have difficulty finding the 5% share they are supposed to pay, even though experience has shown that a higher level of participation from employers and families is possible.
- Reluctance on the part of employers to send young workers on apprentice training: it would be useful if the local collectives and craftworkers' associations could play a greater role in motivating employers to allow their apprentices to go on CQP training.
- Recruitment: the training scheme is publicised to apprentices by the craftworkers' associations, not by the training colleges. However, although the FENAB has done considerable work here, the technical college principals emphasised that not all collectives were aware of the new scheme. They would like to see the collectives being more active in promoting the CQP or, failing this,

that the task be devolved to the training establishments themselves.

- Interruption of the training phases: employers sometimes stop their young apprentices from continuing the training because they have urgent work for them to do.
- The low level of education of the young apprentices: some of them have difficulties with the French entry examination to the CQP because of their poor knowledge of the French language. To overcome this difficulty, a new entry test is planned for the new intake.
- Weakness of the system for helping the young people into work at the end of their training: the solution of giving the Employment and Vocational Training Observatory the task of assessing employment opportunities for the young people would not appear to be appropriate.
- Once qualified, the young apprentices lack the financial resources for setting themselves up in work: waged employment remains the exception in the craft sector; self-employment is therefore practically the only solution but this requires a minimum amount of start-up capital.

Broadening future access to the CQP to craftworkers

So far, only craftworkers who have agreed to send an apprentice on CQP training are given prior training, and this is so that they can fulfil their role as a master trainer.

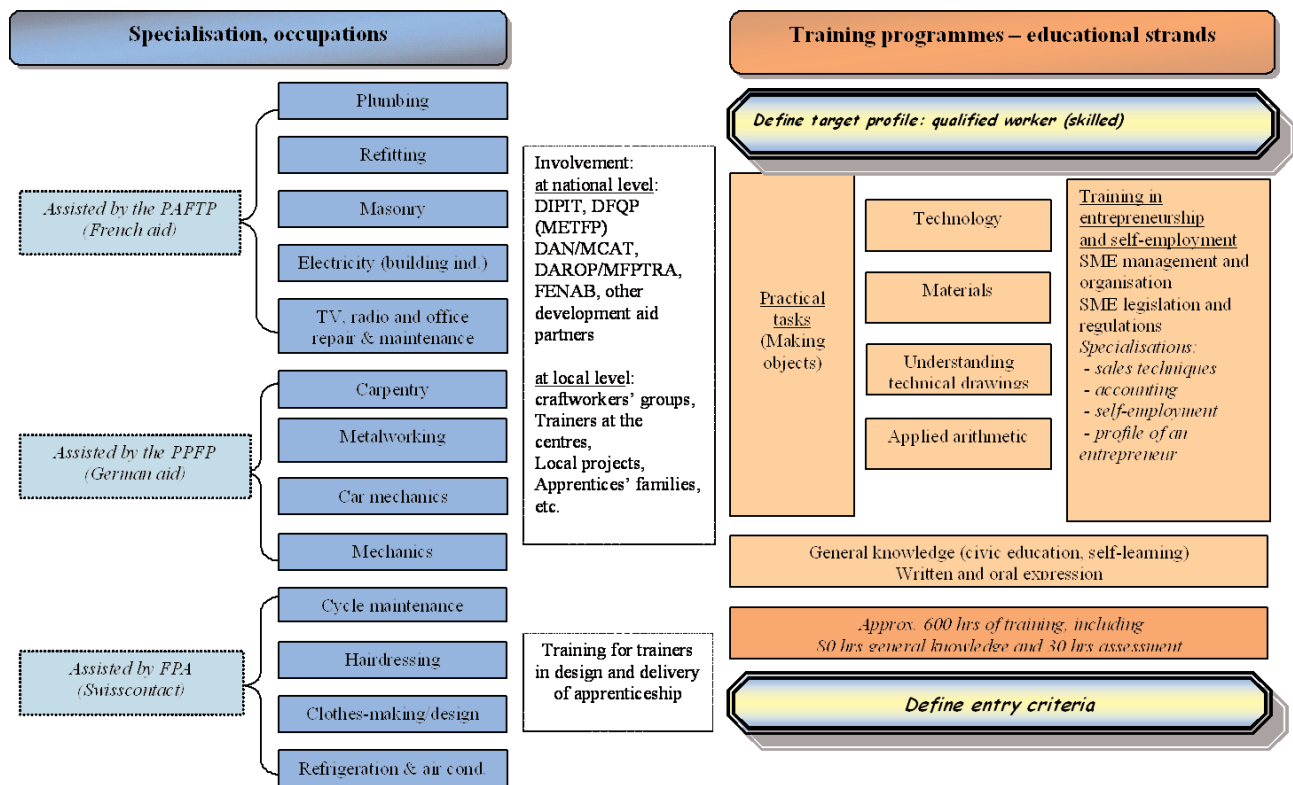
The CQP system also contains provisions for craftworkers to prepare for the certificate by doing continuing training. The craftworkers' collective and social partners met during the field survey all emphasised the importance of offering craftworkers the possibility of obtaining the CQP. They took the view that Benin's craftworkers would be less reluctant to send apprentices on dual training if they themselves also had the possibility of obtaining the same qualification as the young people. Otherwise there was a risk that the craftworkers would increasingly feel that they were giving of their best to the young people, only to see them set themselves up as more highly skilled and better equipped competitors.

To make the CQP accessible to craftworkers, the occupational portfolios will have to be broken down into training modules adapted to the possibilities the craftworkers have of making time available for attending training courses.

Modules of between one and seven days are currently being considered. These would be organised on an open basis, delivered in a recognised training centre and would be accredited successively after approval by the ministry. Once they had each module accredited, the craftworkers would be entitled to sit the national CQP examination.

There is strong demand for this system to be introduced rapidly since it would, from the employers' point of view, represent recognition of their skills as well as establishing minimum standards for entry into the profession. The craftworkers' sector bodies claim to be able to gather the funding from among their members (cf. the FENAB's pro-

Figure 1. Development of training through dual apprenticeship



Source: Ministry for TVET.

posed collective skills development fund), from the FODEFCA and from other technical and financial partners. It should be pointed out that Swisscontact, in conjunction with the FODEFCA, currently pays for the training of those craftworkers who take part in the CQP apprentice training system.

Ensuring the CQP's success in the long term

While the CQP has become established as a basic achievement on which the potential widespread roll-out of dual training can be built, the point of no return has still not been reached, and will only be reached if significant all those concerned can invest resources. For the time being, the FODEFCA funds most apprentices' training. The Ministry for TVET (now the Ministry for Higher Education and Vocational Training) allocated a specific budget to the measures for the first time in 2006, amounting to CFAF 36 million (approximately €55,800). The fact that the CQP has been explicitly included in the government's budget is recognition of the principle that the measures come under the sphere of initial training and should thus receive public funding. However, the amounts involved are as yet insufficient to reach the quantitative and qualitative objectives set by the various public authorities and private partners. Above all, they are enough to boost the ministry's potential scope for training apprentices and master craftsmen. According to data from the ministry, the CQP, which is offered at the Abomey training centre in specialised skills development units (*Unités de perfectionnement spécialisées – UPS*) and in a number of public and private technical colleges, will require further development of training facilities, and in particular the construction of vocational training centres.

To reach the point of no return, the CQP also needs to be targeted at training craftworkers themselves. More generally, the other elements of the new measures – the CQM, the Occupational Development Centres, and pre-vocational skills training for 12-14-year old school dropouts – need to be clarified and put into practice.

4.2.2 The CQM: a way of promoting standards and occupational development

Whereas the CQP is aimed at apprentices and craftworkers who are sufficiently educated to be able to do a classroom-based training course, it should be remembered that the

majority of young people do not have access to training because they do not have the level of education required. There is also a strong demand on the part of craftworkers for recognition of their skills independently of their level of literacy. The dual training outlined in the 2001 reform, confirmed by employers in 2003 at the workshop to validate the Guidelines for Dual Apprenticeship and its Widespread Introduction in Benin (*Orientations de l'apprentissage dual et les lignes directrices pour sa généralisation au Bénin*) and adopted in national legislation through Decree 2005-117 of 17 March 2005, establishes the CQP and the CQM as part of the same movement and sets out the conditions for the organisation of and access to the CQM.

What is the CQM?

The CQM responds to the need expressed by sector bodies to give a common, nationally recognised element to traditional apprenticeship certification. In this sense, it is a certificate attesting to the completion of an apprenticeship and can be obtained by young people aged 16 and over. It marks the acquisition of practical vocational skills by the apprentice, and is intended in the long term to replace the Completion Certificate (*Diplôme de libération*)⁴⁵ granted by the employer. The intended application of the CQM is much wider however. It is intended to make the various trades more ethical by imposing quality standards. In Benin, as throughout the sub-region, anyone who wants to can set themselves up as a craftworker even if they do not have the required qualifications. There is no legislation covering this. The aim of the CQM is therefore to become the equivalent of European vocational training certificates. In this perspective it is not only aimed at apprentices but also implies that those already working in the craft sector acquire a certain level of skills authorising them to set themselves up in the trade and to pass on good practice to their apprentices.

The prospects for introducing the CQM

⁴⁵ The "libération" marks the end of the apprentice's apprenticeship. It consists of a ceremony in which the master craftsman discharges the apprentice from his workshop. The apprentice and his employer make a tour of the neighbourhood and the employer introduces the apprentice to other master craftsmen and inhabitants. After this ceremony, the apprentice is considered to be a master craftsman. This is indispensable for finding future clients, but the process is much criticised. The ceremony is very costly, and since apprentices often cannot afford it, they are obliged to wait, sometimes for several years. Also, and more importantly, the certificate received by the apprentice is of value only in a limited geographical area and does not attest to a level of skills (Ludovic Khamchane).

The introduction of the CQM will significantly improve employers' participation in the training of their apprentices. The fact that employers, as well as apprentices, will have access to the training will limit the risks of possible conflicts arising from the rapid emergence of a new class of well-trained professionals in competition with the existing employers.

Unlike the CQP, which is an initial training measure, the CQM falls under continuing training provision. This means it comes under the responsibility of the Ministry for Tourism and Crafts, and the Ministry for Employment and Public Administration, and also implies the active participation of sector bodies, in particular the FENAB, in mobilising craftworkers and setting up panels to award the certificate. The Ministry for Vocational Training should however also be involved in the implementation of the CQM, since it is responsible for drawing up accreditation guidelines, and also because the CQM is part and parcel of the overall set of measures which also include the CQP.

The CQM is due to be introduced for the same occupational areas as have been selected for the CQP. On the basis that two panels will be required for each occupational area across the whole country, the Ministry for Tourism and Crafts will have to organise, in conjunction with the FENAB, 50 examination sittings each year. It would appear that this is financially feasible, given the relatively low cost of organising such panels and the fact that craftworkers could make a contribution, either from their own funds or via the planned collective skills development fund, which is intended to partially or wholly finance vocational training initiatives for craftworkers' associations.

While the CQP can be considered symbolically as the cornerstone in the development of dual apprenticeship in Benin, the CQM will undoubtedly constitute the system's foundations. It will first of all recognise and validate skills acquired through traditional apprenticeship schemes. It will then organise this recognition and validation around agreed minimum standards for key skills in each occupation. Lastly, it will represent a first stage in the training process for a class of professionals, whether literate or not, who will then be encouraged to continue to train themselves and thus increase the quality and profitability of their activities. This will of course have a beneficial effect on the economy as a whole.

4.2.3 Clarifying and establishing Occupational Development Centres and pre-vocational skills training

The field survey came across two concepts, the content of which remains to be clarified in both theoretical and practical terms. These are the Occupational Development Centres (*Centres de métiers* – CMs) and the provision of pre-vocational skills training for 12- to 14-year-olds. These two concepts are particularly important with regard to the planned objectives of the ten-year education plan, mentioned above, of reducing the transition rate between primary and secondary education from its current level of 72% to 50%, thus boosting vocational training of young people.

The challenges facing the Occupational Development Centres

The ten-year plan indicates that those not admitted to secondary education will be encouraged to attend CMs. The creation of these centres is one of the strands of the TVET reform⁴⁶, which states that “the creation is envisaged, under the supervision of the Ministry in charge of promoting employment and with the involvement of other government bodies and non-governmental agencies, of Occupational Development Centres in different regions of the country. These are aimed above all at the target group of young school dropouts, apprentices, and unemployed graduates.” The Ministry for Higher Education and Vocational Training, and more especially the Ministry for Crafts and the Benin National Craftworkers' Federation, are responsible for drawing up a strategy for CMs.

Within the Ministry for Higher Education and Vocational Training, the creation of the Occupational Development Centres is the responsibility of the Directorate for Vocational Training and Skills Development (*Direction de la formation et de la qualification professionnelles* – DFQP). The directorate has identified ten CMs in its planning schedule, one of which is waiting to be fitted out (the CM in Sè), three of which are under construction (Pahou, Nikki and

⁴⁶ MEFTP, *Plan d'action pour la mise en œuvre de l'ETFP, Stratégie 11 : accroissement des capacités d'accueil dans l'ETFP.*

Covè) and six of which are awaiting funding (Toviklin, Kota-Molongou, Adjohoun, Sakété, Cotonou and Dassa-Zoumè). The field survey noted not only the strategic importance of the CMs but also the need to clarify the content of their future activities. Some of those we met perceived the CM as a training centre for the CQM, others saw it as a reference CQM training centre but where the person would be trained on the premises of the craft employer. For some people it was a virtual concept involving the organisation of visiting trainers to regions and local areas where no training establishment exists, and finally others saw it as a sort of community centre for 12- to 14-year-olds to keep up their learning skills and have an initiation into different trades to prepare them for going into dual apprenticeship. According to the DFQP, the delay in building and fitting out CMs, and in particular a model centre that will enable training content to be designed and tested, is the reason why the CQM system has not yet got off the ground.

According to the technical and financial partners met (French aid, Swisscontact and Danida), although no centre has actually been set up yet, thought is being given to the question of where the centres should be located, bearing in mind the economic potential of the area (processing of agricultural products in the region of Covè, for example, ceramics in Sè, and stonemasonry in the northern region, etc). These partners regret the absence of terms of reference defining the objectives, details of implementation and functioning of the centres.

The urgent need to develop pre-vocational and pre-apprenticeship skills

The ten-year plan does not mention a specific strategy for children between the ages of 11 and 14, who leave primary school but are not old enough to go into apprenticeship, even though UNICEF has commissioned a study in this area looking at the concept of alternative primary education. However, the option it defends of limiting the percentage of children entering secondary education while the proportion of children completing primary education is rising, added to the low survival rate in elementary education (50%) can only mean that there will still be a large number of children not going to school before they can go into apprenticeship. In 2015, at least 110,000 children will be affected by the restrictions on entering secondary school, in

addition to those who have dropped out of school at an earlier age. Achieving the objective of universal education – taken to mean the completion of primary education – will only be possible if a solution can be found which justifies keeping children in the school system. The creation of pre-vocational skills training schemes, in which children could forge, keep up or increase their basic schooling was a suggestion made by most of the people we interviewed.

In the opinion of the French development aid authorities, the CMs could play a part in taking in children on pre-vocational skills training or pre-apprenticeship training. They would cater for children who had left school but who were not old enough to start an apprenticeship, and would offer them a second chance to forge, keep up or develop their basic knowledge in arithmetic, reading and writing, and have an introduction to three or four trades in order to help them choose a future occupation. This would help prepare them to enter the dual apprenticeship system in which they could hope to achieve if not a CQP then at least a CQM, and in any event would help them to obtain a nationally recognised certificate.

4.2.4 The potential and limitations of the current reform

The introduction of dual training as the core of the system in Benin's reform of vocational training is remarkable in a number of ways.

- It is unique in that it draws on the practical skills of traditional apprenticeship, while encouraging a move towards minimum occupational standards. It also takes better account of the needs of the informal sector, by progressively introducing theoretical training and training in technological developments and quality aspects in production methods and services.
- It has the characteristic of using coordination, consultation and partnership working to enhance an innovative trend and at the same time establish a legislative and regulatory framework which makes it a structuring element of the reform of the existing system.
- Lastly, it is interesting in that it constitutes an almost unique example of the transformation of the formal training system on the basis of the informal sector's skills and training needs. Benin is without doubt in this sense a model for the renewal of its whole training system,

which has been based on the strategic and operational reorganisation of the system to meet the informal sector's skills and training needs.

However, the fact that it is an excellent model does not guarantee the success of these reforms. The dual training system has not yet reached the point of no return. It needs considerable financial resources in order to be developed and these have not yet been secured. Paradoxically, there is also a lack of strategic vision among most of the people

met concerning the occupations that should be developed and the skills that need to be anticipated in order to allow Benin to boost its development in the short and medium term. There is no forecast analysis regarding medium-term labour market prospects, even though such an analysis would enable better targeting of the priorities of the current reform. Lastly, it is difficult to identify training developments taking place outside the dual system and particularly aside from the CQP, which appears to monopolise everyone's

5. Training initiatives other than dual training

energy and attention. The introduction of national certificates should really be accompanied by a whole range of technical and business management training schemes aiming to meet the training needs expressed by craftworkers themselves who want to gain better access to the market and make their activities more profitable.

The meeting with Porto Novo craftworkers provided an opportunity to ascertain the extent to which they sought training other than that envisaged as part of dual training. They were very vocal in their desire to access continuing training

so that they could keep abreast of technological developments and gain better access new products and services markets. They confirmed their need of management and accounting skills and the absolute necessity of being able to work with the new equipment used in apprenticeship training. Lastly, they expressed the need for functional literacy without which they would not be able to fulfil their master craftsman function, because training young people means being able to explain skills in conceptual terms.

This chapter reports on some important training schemes

5.1 Continuing training for craftworkers

outside CQP and CQM remit in the craftwork and agricultural sectors. They are mostly funded by FODEFCA, the main funding source for training in the informal craftwork and agricultural sectors. Across all the funding allocated, the modern sector accounts for less than 50% of beneficiaries.

The examples described are not representative of all the training provided, but simply give a general idea of the types of training provided in the field of technical and managerial skills.

5.1.1 Training masons for improved construction site technical skills (Cabinet AJ Conseil)

The training, lasting five days and compiled and financed by the PAFTP, involved 24 masons, aged 25 to 50, who had difficulty preparing an estimate and understanding a building plan. They wanted to improve their skills⁴⁷. Their difficulties became apparent during the execution of contracts: they misestimated the materials required, were unsure about how to interpret plans or failed to comply with building standards. The result was unsatisfactory work and, in some

cases, termination of the contract.

The five-day training course was broken down into six sessions, covering architectural drawing symbols, dimensioning, geometrical figures, orthogonal projection, preparing an estimate and interpreting reference documents. Although the skill level of the participants was relatively low, making it perhaps difficult for them to understand geometrical figures or prepare an estimate, the training enabled each of them to acquire the basic skills required to read and interpret an estimate, the conventions and symbols usually used in building construction and the measurements in technical and building drawings.

Most of the apprentices were satisfied – in particular due to the ability of the trainer to adapt to the pace and motivation of his audience – and expressed their wish to take advantage of other training courses, particularly in the erection of

⁴⁷ Information taken from J.R. Kpanou (2004), *Rapport de formation concernant la formation des maîtres maçons sur la lecture de plan et l'élaboration de devis*, Cotonou, Benin.

buildings.

5.1.2 Training plumbers to comply with sanitary equipment installation standards

Training for plumbers, compiled and financed by the PAFTP, was organised by the African Organisation for Equipment, Works and Technologies (*Société africaine d'équipements, de travaux et de technologies* – SAFRET-TE) with the purpose of training them in the installation of sanitary equipment in compliance with current standards – most of them carried out such installations according to their own notions – and in the interpretation of plumbing layout plans⁴⁸.

This five-day training course, designed for master plumbers aged 28 to 53 wishing to improve their services on the job market, aimed to help plumbers recognise and interpret conventional plumbing standards and symbols, familiarise them with the operation of sanitary equipment, master installation techniques, and lastly, teach them to understand how upgraded sanitary installations work.

There was keen interest in the training in that it enabled plumbers to raise their general skills levels and make their services comply with international standards and regulations. The 21 plumbers who took part all expressed a wish to take advantage of further training, especially in the field of village and urban water supplies. They also stressed that it would be beneficial to roll this training out across the whole of Benin in order to harmonise information at national level.

5.1.3 Advanced training course for owners of tailoring and dressmaking businesses

The Arakou Association of Tailors and Dressmakers asked FODEFCA to provide the training, which was supported by Swisscontact. The starting point was an acknowledgement that training merely by copying proved inadequate when it comes to meeting the demands of technological development and knowledge acquisition in the trade, and developments in fashion. Lack of occasional courses to update and upgrade prevented most tailors and dressmakers from successfully producing new styles.

161 tailors and dressmakers from two towns, Parakou and Malanville, took part. The course consisted of eight sessions, each lasting one day, and covered the following tech-

niques:

- how to take standard measurements properly;
- how to use different cutting techniques;
- how to make up a skirt, a Sahelian shirt and trousers in compliance with standards;
- how to use garment finishing techniques.

The trainer, who was a designer specialised in the production of modern garments, monitored the progress of each participant throughout the training course.

These three examples all share certain characteristics in that they establish a strong link between training, technological progress and the incorporation of new standards by the participants. In this sense, they clearly constitute the counterpart, in terms of continuing training, of the basic philosophy of dual training, namely, the acquisition of a certificate certifying knowledge of minimum standards in an occupation.

5.1.4 GERME training courses on better business management

These training courses, which were launched by the ILO, were implemented in nine west African countries with the support of the World Bank. The training focused on two types of target group: those who could read and write and received traditional training, and those who could neither read nor write and were given GERME Level 1 training. The BAA, with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, was very active in delivering GERME training in Benin. Benin actually pressed the regional delegation in Dakar to implement Level 1 training and was the first to experiment with it.

The objectives of the training, which involved many Benin craftworkers, may be defined as follows:

- To enable men and women working in the informal sector to understand the principle of developing income-generating type work into a more structured micro and small enterprise;
- To strengthen their entrepreneurial skills and enable

⁴⁸ Information taken from T. Amoussouga (2005), *Rapport de formation concernant la formation des maîtres artisans plombiers sur les techniques de réalisation des installations sanitaires de bâtiment*, Cotonou, Benin.

them to progress step by step, by confronting them with the hard realities of developing their business;

- To enable them to embark on a process of developing their business, starting from an idea with potential and a development plan which their training enabled them to draw up and implement.

According to the expert interviewed, who promoted the GERME programme as part of BAA's activity, the effect of such training was to resolve one of the main obstacles to the development of craftworkers' businesses, namely access to bank loans. Bankers usually refused craftworkers' requests for loans because of the lack of visibility and traceability in their production process. Without any record of the current situation and no development plan, the craftworker gave the impression that he might disappear at any moment and not put to good use the loan he had been given.

5.1.5 The project to promote craft enterprises and SMEs (GTZ's PPA project)

The overall aim of this project, with German support to the tune of €6.74 million for the 1998-2006 period, is to change attitudes and create a dynamic mind-set through which craftworkers in the informal economy would themselves create conditions favourable to improving their work and their productivity. Set up in association with the FENAB, the PPA project involves 54 of Benin's 77 local districts. It enables craftworkers in all these districts to improve their work and service delivery and to "develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure adequate representation of the interests of the private economy at municipal and national level". It includes both advanced training and joint community activities, the organisation of seminars, study or business trips and organisational development for craftworkers. The group to be trained is given the greatest possible independence: participants define the training topic, the training objectives, and, if they wish, they choose the trainer and negotiate the cost of the training. This approach has several advantages: it encourages a speedy response (training can be organised in the two weeks following the request). It

also encourages profitability (the cost is lower than if negotiated by a state body or project managers) and it encourages craftworkers to take ownership of their project.

To date, the project has run 1,091 schemes, including 542 in the field of training. The advanced training course involved 9,221 craftworkers in over 30 different trades. Although the German agency covered most of the costs of the training, it encouraged maximum involvement by participants. Thus, some activities were co-financed by participants to the tune of 34%, which is remarkable bearing in mind that the proportion required by FODEFCA is 10%. Each training course is individually monitored. In the six to ten weeks after training, a trainer visits each participant in his or her workshop to check that the content of the course really is being implemented. This provides an opportunity not only to check whether benefits are real but also to offer additional training in the craftworker's actual working situation. This approach is essential to the extent that it is not always clear how to apply theory in practice. It seems that the rate of skills transfer increases after the trainer's visit.

An impact evaluation was carried out in the six months following the training. It was completed by the craftworkers themselves, so that they could ascertain whether or not the training had a positive effect on their work (increase in turnover, profit, reduction in costs, opening up of new markets and so on). Evaluation results over the 2000-05 period demonstrated that 60% of the craftworkers trained confirmed that their turnover and profit had increased following the training, and their costs had gone down. 70% said they had accessed new markets and over 80% acknowledged that they had significantly improved their technical skills. The real evaluation of the PPA project will relate to the capacity of the craftworkers to continue their business development momentum once GTZ leaves Benin, by January 2007 at the latest.

The various training courses described are only a sample of what is currently being implemented. They describe the types of response by the various promoters to the huge demand expressed by the craftworkers surveyed for advanced training, further skills development and adaptation to

5.2 Training in the agricultural sector

new production techniques. They do not adequately meet their urgent need for management and accounting training. Most importantly, they do not satisfy the desires of all craftworkers, once trained, to be able to work on equipment appropriate to the new skills and techniques. They lack the money to buy such equipment.

In contrast to the craft sector, it was not possible to establish direct contact with the beneficiaries of training in the informal agricultural sector. However, information gathered during and after the field survey visit provides a general idea of the training carried out in the sector.

5.2.1 Schemes funded by the FODEFCA

The FOEDEFCA training fund provides training for apprentices studying for the CQP and technical training for craftworkers and farmers throughout Benin. Its work in the field of agriculture is targeted half at the formal sector and half at the informal sector. Excluding modern farms, the 15 schemes funded include the training of 100 Ketou farmers in how to use the raw materials employed in feeding pigs, the training of 15 farmers per village (710 in total) in the local authority areas of Zou, Les Collines, Le Mono and Le Couffo in the production of cassava, and the training of 245 women from Dangbo, Glazoué and Tori-Bossito in the technique of sun-drying food crops.

The training of 545 women farmers from Ouémé in bay leaf and lemon balm cultivation techniques is one example of the type of training organised by FODEFCA in the sector. The training was carried out at a real farm. It was divided into 26 five-day sessions, with each session involving a minimum of twenty women and extending over a maximum period of three months. The trainer, a specialist in the teaching of production techniques, established a close working relationship with the women, and provided support and supervision throughout all the stages involved in the production of bay leaves and lemon grass. The trainer also ensured that the women absorbed all the relevant knowledge and know-how. The goal was not only to enable them to learn all the practical production techniques but also to equip them with the ability to cascade what they learned to other village producers and thus to become leaders in the dissemination of production techniques.

5.2.2 Activities undertaken by rural family centres⁴⁹

Rural family centres (*Maisons Familiales Rurales* – MAFARs) provide dual training for young people in rural areas who already work in farming or trade, but who have had little or no basic training. There are three MAFARs in Benin, one in Abomey, one in Kilibo (opened in 1995) and one in Sam (in the Kandi region, which opened in 1992).

Training provided by MAFARs covers farming techniques, animal husbandry, environmental protection and the preservation and marketing of products. There is also a literacy course for those who require it (one third of the learners are illiterate). The training involves three days per month in the classroom, and extends over 24 months for men and 18 months for women, with the remainder of the training taking place on the family farm.

Alongside dual training, the MAFAR concept is based on two other fundamental elements: on the one hand, the participation of parents, particularly with respect to welcoming/hosting pupils for practical training and contributing to training costs, and on the other hand, fostering an atmosphere in which rural people are prepared to run occasional training activities in villages on topics such as saving, loans, hygiene and water management.

Attending a MAFAR course seems to benefit young people enormously. They are all unanimous in saying that the training they received enabled them to increase production and thereby increase their incomes noticeably, and also to assume more responsibility in their community or work situation because of a better understanding of citizenship.

The number of people trained in MAFARs is relatively limited. Over ten years (1995 to 2005), the three MAFARs trained on average 20 men and 7 women on 2-year training courses (3 days per month at MAFAR centres), 20 people on a 6-month training course (1 day per month at MAFAR centres) and lastly, 230 people in occasional village-based training sessions. It has to be stressed that recruitment

⁴⁹ Most of the information given here is taken from the mission report and mid-term evaluation of the project, entitled *Rapport de mission, Mission d'évaluation à mi-parcours du projet Multi pays des MFR d'Afrique : appui à la création-reliance et reconnaissance des MFR*, by J.B. Bouyer (January 2006).

campaigns for courses is for two years and there is no further recruitment until the first campaign is completed. For 2005/2006, the number of people trained over a two-year period at the Abomey MAFAR has risen to 18, while the KILIBO MAFAR has trained 60.

MAFARs' funding is based mainly sourced from the fees paid by learners for their training (CFAF 20,000, or €30, in Abomey and CFAF 5,000, or €8, in Kilibo), local subsidies, service provision by MAFARs, and a subsidy from the Vendée Federation of rural family centres (*Fédération des Maisons familiales rurales de Vendée*). This latter contribution was recently changed into a grant of CFAF 30,000 (slightly over €45) per person per year, by way of incentive to the MAFARs to train more learners.

MAFARs are working hard to become recognised within the national training system, which is expressed by their willingness to act in partnership with ministries responsible for vocational training reform and local communities. Close and constructive relationships have developed, with, in particular, the creation of an interministerial committee responsible for supervising MAFARs and their training certification standards. The CQP could be used to validate the long MAFAR training courses. MAFARs are also represented in the National Coordination and Monitoring Committee for the national agricultural and rural training development strategy, whose mission is to design a coherent national agricultural education system. They are also part of the National Agricultural and Rural Training Network (*Réseau national sur les formations agricoles et rurales – RAFAR*), supported by the Ministries of Agriculture and Higher Education and Vocational Training, whose objective is to provide food for thought on the development of a national agricultural and rural training strategy.

5.2.3 NGO initiatives

Various NGOs also work in the agricultural sector. The NGO Songhai is developing production training centres in the agro-pastoral and fishing fields. It is currently working in the towns of Porto Novo, Savalou, Parakou, Lokassa, Kinwedji and Kpomasse, where 200 pupils are undergoing 18 months of training. Songhai has 40 partners, among them the governments of Benin and Niger, and also French development aid authorities, USAID, the UNDP⁵⁰ and the UNHCR⁵¹.

The NGO BORNEfonden also works in Benin on training farmers, similarly to what it is doing in other West African countries (Togo and Burkina Faso).

These non-CQP training schemes and practices in the craft and agricultural sectors demonstrate that Benin has a wide range of potential training courses and providers, and most of them have content and methods which is well-suited to informal sector target groups. They highlight that the country does not lack the capacity to design and develop training, but rather encounters problems in terms of delivery. Such difficulties arise from the absence of priority investment policy for certain schemes and for certain people, and the lack of resources that such investment requires. Nevertheless, according to the experts met, the fact that the funds available for training have always been larger than the amounts requested indicate that there are other obstacles and factors, namely the complexity or slowness of application and funding procedures, a lack of awareness among public authorities of the leverage effect of vocational training, the absence of an economic strategy for the products to be promoted and services to be developed, the existence of a tax system that stifles job creation and consequently the desire for training, and so on. This study's final proposals will look at all these obstacles and how they can be overcome in order to strengthen current training schemes and make them dynamic means for boosting the informal sector.

⁵⁰ United Nations Development Programme.

⁵¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

6. Prospects for change and action

Meeting the various public and private stakeholders provided an opportunity to discuss ways and means to enable Benin to use vocational training as a dynamic and influential force in halting the downward spiral of an ever more informal and dependent economy, and thus maximise its chances of upturn and solid growth. A num-

ber of future directions that effectively confirm intervention in the field of training as a powerful and essential element in an overall strategy emerge from the information gleaned at meetings and the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data obtained during the course of the study.

6.1 Promoting a strategic vision through key jobs

Setting up the dual training system initially led, as part of the CQP, to the selection of seven occupations relating to building (masonry, electricity, plumbing, refitting) and mechanics (cycle/motorcycle and motor mechanics). Three new occupations have now been included (clothes-making and design, hairdressing, and refrigeration and air conditioning), and as the initiative gains momentum, the plan is to include sixteen other occupations, mainly in the field of mechanics. Services and food processing are very slightly concerned.

Answers to questions on the reasons for the choice of occupations highlighted that the CQP training system was concerned with enhancing and improving the vocational skills best suited to helping get young people into work. They also showed that the policies implemented, both in the planned construction of vocational training and Occupational Development Centres (CMs) and in curriculum development, were based mainly on existing local dynamics and concerns regarding geographical coverage. Benin's national craft sector development policy for the period up to 2025 describes it as being a well-organised sector, in which craft enterprises operate in a competitive market, and, by enhancing national heritage, contribute to national economic prosperity and the social well-being of craftworkers and the people of Benin in a united and peaceful country⁵². The government has an action plan to put this vision

on an institutional footing in the craft and TVET areas. However, there are few or no feasibility studies that take a forward look at the occupations which will promote economic development and provide high added value, or that place the construction of training and Occupational Development Centres as fundamental aspects of any such approach. All the people interviewed emphasised the importance of an approach that, while based on local circumstances, would further support domestic market occupations (building and civil engineering, agriculture, personal services, etc.), while at the same time investing in sectors with comparative benefits at international level (cotton processing, textiles, cultural craftwork, wood work, etc.). They also stressed that the social dimension, such as the specific contribution of women to family hygiene, the quality of nutrition and schooling, should also be taken into account when considering important occupations for the future.

Given the results of the survey, it seems desirable that the planned development of the dual training system should examine the issue of potentially important future occupations and thus further highlight the skills and qualifications that would boost market growth in Benin. This is something which is eagerly desired by the craftworkers met during the field survey.

⁵² *Déclaration de politique nationale de développement de l'artisanat, op.cit.*

6.2 Including dual apprenticeship in a sustainable development scenario

In 2006, the CQP initiative had its first real test: 292 apprentices were awarded certificates as part of an initiative which was successful both in terms of contractual organisation (formal apprenticeship contracts, supervision, etc.), training design and development (skills training processes), the involvement of different types of trainers (master craftsmen, local trainers, college trainers) and perfecting evaluation methodologies. Everything is in place for rolling out the CQP to achieve a minimum of 3,000 apprentices trained per year.

Consultation with the various public and private officials responsible highlighted that such roll-out was both urgent (having reached a point of no return) and impossible without fully implementing all elements of the reform. From the various opinions obtained, a scenario comprising the following features seems necessary.

6.2.1 Embedding the CQP firmly within the initial training system

Until now, the success of the piloting stage has been dependent on the pooling of efforts by all the national and international partners involved in the design and implementation process and in the coordinated financial support of FODEFCA and external technical and financial partners, in particular French and Swisscontact development aid. Full roll-out of the system, which is something desired by all the people met, will in their opinion require the attainment of the following objectives:

- The Ministry for Vocational Training should decide to make CQP roll-out a structural element in its reform policy and to include it as an investment and operational priority in the state budget. The initiative cannot continue to be funded by FODEFCA alone.
- The same Ministry, in association with all the partners involved in the actual initiative, should also give consideration to the respective budgets which need to be allocated to tangible and intangible investment and to the possibility of cascading the initiative as much through the creation of “virtual centres” maximising the use of existing opportunities⁵³ as through the construction of real centres which are expensive and time-consuming to build.

- International aid and support should be mobilised around the growing impact of the initiative and its extension into regions with strong local growth potential, and into jobs with potential high added value in the medium term.
- Various quantitative objectives should be met. According to unofficial and unvalidated scenarios, the critical threshold beyond which the CQP will reach a critical mass is 7,000 apprentices in training over three CQP cycles, 25 complete training schemes, equipping 30 centres, further training of 200 trainers and the capability of the maximum number of craftworkers’ sector bodies to co-manage and deliver the 25 CQPs.

6.2.2 Training craftworkers at the same time as apprentices

The current conceptual and institutional structure of dual apprenticeship provides for a Vocational Skills Certificate that sets standards for craft occupations (the standards required to work in a given trade) and enables craftworkers to cascade to their apprentices the skills required to make them a qualified professional. In this respect, it is an essential condition of maximising the impact of the CQP initiative that craftworkers obtain the CQM. The creation of Occupational Development Centres (CMs) should also provide an opportunity to make them places where craftworkers will go to first in order to do any continuing training.

The meeting with Porto Novo craftworkers and that with FENAB managers and unions highlighted the strong demand among craftworkers for training to enable them to pass on their skills in the most effective way. It also underlined their right to access literacy programmes, hitherto denied, namely to a minimum standard of theoretical knowledge without which they could not access new technologies and flourishing markets. This demand became more urgent as they realised that the rapid growth in the number of well-trained apprentices would further highlight their own skills gaps and place them in an unfavourable position in a very competitive market.

⁵³ Discussions with people met related to the possibility of organising training closer to potential participants by using existing local premises in the various areas concerned and by bringing in the trainers.

This training for craftworkers will require substantial financial resources. The FODEFCA's purpose is to allocate funds for continuing training among craftworkers. The creation of the Craftworkers' Collective Fund (*Fonds mutualiste des artisans*) for which the statutes already exist, should enable future financial support for craftworkers who cannot make the personal contribution required from them by the fund.

6.2.3 Setting up pre-apprenticeships to facilitate access to the CQP

Dual apprenticeship is aimed at young people over 14 with a level of education at least equivalent to the end of primary school and apprenticed to a master. The age criterion of 14 years set by the ILO can be changed only further to the agreement of workplace inspectors. The vast majority of Benin youngsters have left school well before the age of 14 and therefore have not completed primary schooling. In the time between leaving school and entering apprenticeship, they have been left to their own devices or exposed to the dangers of exploitation as child workers, and, in addition, have largely forgotten what they learned at school. So, once they reach apprenticeship age, these children are no longer equipped to begin an apprenticeship requiring a certain level of education and at least some command of French.

Linking pre-apprenticeship and roll-out of the CQP will therefore avoid the social waste of children who hang around the streets with no social and occupational potential and enable them to access training, which will give them the best opportunity to succeed in the world of work. It is also another way of achieving the Millennium Goal of universal education by proving that, in accordance with Benin's ten-year education plan, in societies with a strong informal economy there really are avenues to success that depend less on going to college than on a valid vocational route leading to social and professional integration appropriate to the country's circumstances.

6.2.4 Refocusing the entire training system on dual schemes

Implementing the skills-based approach into the CQP initiative involves practitioners in the analysis of work situations and the drawing up of different benchmarks for activities,

skills and training. The result is that apprentices acquire skills that are better adapted to real workplace needs than the knowledge and know-how acquired through traditional technical and vocational education, notably the CAP Vocational Training Diploma (*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*). As already mentioned, the Benin employers' organisation (*Conseil national du patronat*) had no hesitation in expressing the preference of modern enterprises for a certificate designed and delivered within the informal sector.

Along with priority investment in rolling it out, this view of the CQP as a challenge to TVET calls for fundamental reform of the qualified worker (CAP) and technician (DT) programmes, so that technical and vocational education does not end up being discredited and can above all become capable of meeting the real needs of the Benin economy. Even the college principals responsible for such education say that the whole education system should adopt the dual approach in order to remain and/or become effective. Nevertheless, dual training has no relevance unless it also adopts a skills-based training approach which adapts training curricula to real skills development needs further to rigorous analysis of jobs and vacancies to be filled.

6.2.5 Applying a process-based approach to the established system

As already mentioned, Benin's approach is remarkable in that it is piloting innovative schemes while at the same time immediately including them within a regulatory framework that lays down the precise rules for delivery. However, close examination of this institutional process suggests that public and private officials should go the whole way and adopt a process-based approach, that's to say one which applies analysis, decision-making, planning and benchmarking to all that has to be done. In concrete terms, this means that:

- The decision to create various establishments (vocational training and Occupational Development Centres) does not seem to have been the subject of prior feasibility studies to justify their geographical or sectoral location and their impact in terms of qualifications and jobs.
- Budgeting for setting up such centres should entail detailed calculation of the tangible investment required at the time and an appreciation of future maintenance

costs. Without such projections, centres run the risk of being set up on the basis of maximum available credit without any reasonable means of meeting their future costs.

- More broadly, the number of planned new establishments cannot be decided without in-depth consideration of what type of centres should be created, and in particular consideration of the merits of virtual and mobile centres that can ensure provision is better tailored to demand, without it being restricted to fixed locations. At present, there are no defined terms of reference for such centres, which could pose a problem regarding their operational capacity to meet their defined objectives.

- Lastly, in view of the limited resources available, choices should probably be made between structural and intangible investments. It would be useful to discuss and set up a decision-making process incorporating such choices as part of the dialogue and coordination provided for by the reform.

This is not an exhaustive list of the determinant factors which should govern CQP roll-out. Aspects such as the effect of the CQP on the economic and social standing of people acquiring it will be dealt with below. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the CQP in a clear strategic and operational plan demonstrates the extent to which it is the cornerstone of the success of vocational training reform begun in 2001.

6.3 Linking training to job creation and employment growth

Apprentices' access to the CQP should not be an end in itself, but must really help them find suitable employment. For this to be achieved, they should be monitored (for example, in terms of what they end up doing three or six months later). The aim is to check that these young people are really taken on by a master craftsman or an enterprise, or that they have the means to set up their own work. If the CQP does not manage to help people into work, it will rapidly come to be considered as an attractive but ineffective certificate. As in Cameroon, which has several support schemes to help people into self-employment (with support from the French and German aid agencies), Benin is currently developing support and credit facilities which are suited to the types of jobs that need to be created. It is also supporting the introduction of schemes run by micro-credit organisations.

Swisscontact offers a good example of aid in this area. It is working to facilitate craftworkers' access (and notably that of young people who have got their CQP) to micro-credit, in agreement with Benin's Regional Solidarity Bank (*Banque régionale de solidarité Bénin* – BRS). The scheme works as follows:

- Craftworkers present their business start-up plans to the district collective, which assesses it and selects the best ones among them.

- Once the plans have been assessed and selected, the craftworkers can obtain start-up credit from the bank, with the amount depending on the type of activity being developed: CFAF 550,000 (about €840) for mechanics; CFAF 1.6 million (€2,440) for refrigeration specialists; CFAF 800,000 (€1,220) for clothing designers/makers; and CFAF 1 million (€1,525) for hairdressers.

Loans can be given on an individual or collective basis. For example, three apprentices can come together and each borrow CFAF 300,000 (around €460). If the investment proves to be a success, they can then borrow up to CFAF 1 million.

Generally speaking, the BRS provides business start-up support in the informal sector for the following target groups:

- unemployed graduates from the various different education systems, including the TVET system;
- apprentices who have completed their training with a master craftsman and who have duly registered on the register of craftworkers and thus recognised by their peers;
- women who are keen to set up income-generating activities;
- non-financial cooperatives of workers, farmers, craftworkers and fishermen;

- very small-scale production businesses which are keen to grow and modernise.

The provision of loans goes hand in hand with the development of compulsory saving schemes, which should be progressively used as from the moment the loan has been obtained. Repayments may be made on a monthly or even a weekly basis. Scheduling of payments may vary on a case-by-case basis, especially if there is a seasonal impact on production.

Benin's BRS banking network opened for business in September 2005, and it is still too soon to assess the impact of its contributions. Nevertheless, the partnership developed with Swisscontact has led to the development of loan allocation arrangements which entail the active involvement of sector bodies.

There are some other types of aid. For example, the FENAB is working together with micro-credit providers to help craftworkers set up in business. The micro-credit providers include the Craftworkers' Guarantee Fund (*Fonds de garantie aux artisans* – FOGA), which provides loans

ranging from CFAF 400,000 to CFAF 10 million. For its part, the FODEFCA is launching a programme to help young craftworkers into work (*Programme d'insertion des jeunes artisans* – PIJA), which provides start-up grants ranging from CFAF 100,000 to CFAF 1 million.

The Porto Novo craftworkers' collective believes that aid mechanisms should give equal priority to both business development and job creation, and that interest rates are still too high, bearing in mind profitability levels in the informal sector. Plans for a Collective Skills Development Fund (*Fonds mutualiste de développement professionnel*) being developed by the FENAB could meet the requirements of this collective, at least in part. The statutes of this fund, which have already been drafted, indeed specify that its purpose would be to wholly or partly finance the fitting out of collective workshops for craftworkers associations. This should help craftworkers individually, and at very least give them access to equipment that is more suited to changes in market requirements.

6.4 Repositioning the informal sector in terms of taxation and labour market access

Similarly to the situation on the other countries surveyed, Beninese craftworkers hesitate to declare their income because the proportion of tax they would pay is higher than their real contribution. As they say themselves, the state taxes them with without taking their real profit levels into account, which consequently hampers business growth and incites those who are expanding to hide their equipment in order to avoid paying too much tax.

Several debates and initiatives have been devoted to the tax situation, however. For example, Decree 2001-271 sets out the conditions for creating, authorising, organising and managing Approved Management Centres (*Centres de gestion agréés* – CGAs), and provides legally registered sector bodies (including those representing craftworkers and farmers) an opportunity to create such centres.

The experts met said that these centres have been set up to help people working in the informal sector to prepare their accounts, thus protecting them from arbitrary over-taxation. However, they say that these CGAs are not working, because taxation levels are still too high, and this discourages sector bodies from supporting them. The Porto Novo craftworkers'

collective takes a slightly different view because it believes that the creation of such a centre establishes the right to tax reductions of up to 40% for its members. It has thus decided to prepare a bid to create a CGA, which has not for the moment gone ahead as a result of differing legal interpretations about whether it is compulsory for these centres to be members of local or national associations.

These differing interpretations do not mean that all of the different people met disagree on the need to develop a tax system which is suited to the realities of the informal sector. At present, entrepreneurs pay various local taxes (for example, taxes on premises and shop signs), although they do not pay those related to the actual activity. A debate is needed on how to introduce a single business tax which could enable craftworkers to register without endangering their business. A debate is also needed on the different types of support necessary for encouraging the launch of new businesses and thus stimulating job creation. The current updated version of the national policy statement on the development of the crafts sector⁵⁴, lists various measures likely to boost the informal sector, including one to offer

crafts enterprises tax exemptions during their first year of activity. It also suggests that crafts enterprises which create jobs and train young people should have a lighter tax burden. Nevertheless, these measures are currently only at the proposal stage.

While tax issues are concerned with the payment of taxes and levies, they also have a major impact on informal enterprises' access to markets. For example, to be eligible to bid for public procurement contracts, they must be able to prove that they have been up to date with their tax payments for a minimum period of four years. The national policy statement makes some innovative proposals in this area. It suggests that certain public contracts be automatically offered to craftworkers in their respective fields of activity (clothes-making, interior design and furniture-making)

through craftworkers' sector bodies. It also proposes that some measures should be taken to facilitate craftworkers' access to international markets through the introduction of subsidies and tax breaks, both for purchasing their materials and for exporting their products.

There is no doubt that the implementation of all of these measures, taken together with other prospective changes and initiatives, would strengthen the informal sector's ability to produce high-quality goods and services and generate jobs. They would also boost the effectiveness of the increasingly important dual training system, which ultimately aims to give the sector's workers an opportunity to assume their rightful place in an economy which does not just meet people's subsistence needs, but which is focused on growth and development.

⁵⁴ *Op.cit.*

7. Concluding observations

Benin is in a unique position among the countries surveyed. On the one hand, its informal economy is highly developed, providing 95% of jobs in the labour market, in contrast to a modern sector which is declining as opposed to growing. On the other, the country is forging the most formal and extensive approach to the development of a vocational training system focused on upgrading the skills of both young people and adults in the non-structured sector.

This system – which is now operational, as 292 apprentices were trained for the first time in 2006 – has several original features. It exploits the value of traditional apprenticeship while progressively transforming it into dual training. It focuses on training a new generation of young qualified workers, while simultaneously making such qualification conditional on upgrading of the skills of craftworkers, many of whom learned their trades exclusively on the job. Although it is still at the experimental stage, in practice it has already earned recognition from economic agents, who consider it to be the cornerstone of the reform of the whole vocational training system.

The reasons for this situation are as follows: a rigorous approach based on the achievements of a tried and tested methodology; an approved reform; consensual involvement of all the national and international stakeholders in a strategy supported by all; the existence of informal sector trade associations which represent both local and regional interests and, at national coordination level, are convinced of the strategic value of vocational training.

As a result of all these factors, Benin is in the best possible situation to introduce a training system which can galvani-

se the whole of the informal sector into action. However, nothing should be taken for granted. Success will depend on the availability of resources to ensure that the CQP, the CQM and pre-vocational training become firmly established at grassroots level. Efforts to ensure an irreversible transformation of traditional apprenticeship into dual apprenticeship must be accompanied by great political and economic determination to get the economy out of its situation of dependency and under-investment, to invest in sectors and occupations which are of strategic interest for national and international markets, to introduce incentives to promote self-employment and micro-enterprises, and, lastly, to make the success of the entire training system a priority of the national development strategy. In the words of one of the people interviewed during the survey, “economic development can only be brought about if it focuses on the development of Beninese men and women”.

It should thus be hoped that the transformation of the former Ministry for TEVT into a Ministry for Higher Education and Vocational Training will not put vocational training in a subordinate position in relation to universities, and that it will to the contrary ensure that vocational training is given a role and mission corresponding to the importance of the issues at stake.

The foundation stones of human resources development have been laid down through the system which has been extensively described in this study, and everything is ready for the edifice to rise from these foundations. However, stakeholders' efforts must be matched with sufficient resources if they are to achieve their objectives.



List of acronyms and abbreviations

BAA	<i>Bureau d'appui aux artisans</i> The craftworkers' support office (Swiss development agency)
CAP	<i>Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle</i> Vocational Training Diploma
CGA	<i>Centre de gestion agréé</i> Approved Management Centre
CIM	<i>Chambre interdépartementale de métiers</i> Interregional Craft Guilds
CMs	<i>Centre des métiers</i> Occupational Development Centres
CNPB	<i>Conseil national du patronat du Bénin</i> The Benin National Employers' Council
CQM	<i>Certificat de qualification au métier</i> Occupational Skills Certificate
CQP	<i>Certificat de qualification professionnelle</i> Vocational Skills Certificate
CSA	<i>Confédération des syndicats autonomes</i> Independent Trade Unions Confederation
CSTB	<i>Confédération des syndicats des travailleurs du Bénin</i> Benin Workers Trade Union Confederation
CTB	<i>Coopération technique belge</i> The Belgian technical cooperation agency
DET	<i>Direction de l'Enseignement technique</i> Technical Education Directorate
DFQP	<i>Direction de la Formation et de la Qualification professionnelle</i> Directorate for Vocational Training and Skills Development
DIPIT	<i>Direction de l'Inspection pédagogique et de l'Innovation technologique</i> Schools Inspectorate and Technological Innovation Directorate
FENAB	<i>Fédération nationale des artisans du Bénin</i> Benin National Federation of Craftworkers
FODEFCA	<i>Fonds de développement de la formation professionnelle continue et de l'apprentissage</i> Continuing Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Development Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product

GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit</i> The German technical cooperation agency
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ILO	International Labour Organization
INSAE	<i>Institut national de la statistique et de l'analyse économique</i> National Institute for Statistics and Economic Analysis
LARES	<i>Laboratoire d'analyse régionale et d'expertise sociale</i> Laboratory for Regional Analysis and Social Research
MAFAR	<i>Maisons familiales rurales</i> Rural Family Centres
MCAT	<i>Ministère de la Culture, de l'Artisanat et du Tourisme</i> Ministry for Culture, Crafts and Tourism
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MESFP	<i>Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle</i> Ministry for Higher Education and Vocational Training
MTFP	<i>Ministère du Travail et de la Fonction publique</i> Ministry for Labour and the Civil Service
PPA	<i>Projet de promotion de l'artisanat et de la petite et moyenne entreprise</i> Project to promote craft enterprises and SMEs
RGPH	<i>Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat</i> General Population and Housing Census
SNFAR	<i>Stratégie nationale de formation en milieu agricole et rural</i> National Training Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Areas
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSTB	<i>Union nationale des syndicats des travailleurs du Bénin</i> The National Union of the Unions of the Workers of Benin
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union

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