

# Unlocking Africa's wealth

## Kato Plant

Lecturer: Department of Auditing, University of Pretoria

### The African Renaissance

Following the eventful birth of the African Renaissance (a movement to improve and uplift Africa), some five or six years ago, education and training has been identified as having a vital role to play in its growth and development. There is a great need to broaden access to learning, and to develop skills, so as to turn around the tragic impact of limited investment, that is exacerbated by the often outdated curricula that haunt the continent's education systems.

The creation of the African Union and the formulation of its New Economic Programme for African Development (NEPAD) indicates a strong commitment to the African continent. NEPAD's objectives are to establish standards of good governance and promote Africa's economic growth and therefore NEPAD is an important component of the African Renaissance. Human development, which addresses training and education, is a top priority issue to be addressed in this process of transformation and maturation in Africa.

The African continent is home to more than 50 countries and a vast number of cultures and traditions. The various countries are also at different stages of development with regard to education and training policies and processes.

### Malawi – the heart and mirror of Africa

Malawi, a republic in south-eastern Africa, was formerly the British protectorate of Nyasaland and one of the smallest countries in Africa (total area of 118 282sq km). It is situated between three giants, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia. In spite of its landlocked position it boasts phenomenal beauty, and a rustic charm that could, with the right mix of training, and business and tourism management skills, grow a robust tourism industry.

During the colonial period (1890s – 1950s), the country was incorporated into the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, finally achieving independence in 1964 with Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda as the first prime minister, and later president for life. In 1994 Malawi held democratic elections for the first time since independence and Dr Bakili Muluzi was elected (and re-elected in 1999) as President. The current President, Bingu wa Mutharika was elected in 2004. The recent progress towards a fully functioning democracy appears to have taken a strong root, and is another essential ingredient for the success of NEPAD.

More than 99 percent of the people of Malawi are black Africans. Principal ethnic groups include the Chewa, the Nyanja and the Ngoni. Though there are six local languages in Malawi, *Chichewa* being the most commonly spoken, the official language is English.

The population is estimated at around 12 million. There are large concentrations of people around the cities. The three major cities are the capital city of Lilongwe, the business centre Blantyre and the fast growing northern city of Mzuzu. In the south, there is more intense cultivation of land and the population is concentrated, while in the north people live in widely scattered villages and the traditional way of life is more prevalent.

Nationally, Malawi's economy is strongly agrarian with most people involved in farming projects. Tobacco, sugar and tea are the main exports, while coffee is increasingly being cultivated.

So, in its key features, Malawi is a microcosm of what is to be an African nation: its population has many distinct ethnic affiliations; a multiplicity of languages, with the national language being that of the former colonial power; strong urbanisation trends; agricultural production that is being transformed from the self-sustaining diversity of traditional subsistence farming to plantation style monocultures of exportable commodities, which generate most of the national foreign currency requirements.

## **Education in Malawi**

In the early 1990s about 1.4 million learners attended primary schools. Enrolment increased dramatically to 2.9 million in 1995 after the government abolished school fees for primary education. Enrolment in secondary schools however, remains low (only 17% of secondary school-aged children attend school). With regard to tertiary education, the University of Malawi at Zomba (which was founded in 1964), and its affiliated institutions, had approximately 3 200 students in 1999.

The investment in tertiary education and training is however, almost non-existent. There is a need for institutions that provide relevant education and training to the people of Malawi. Except for the University of Malawi, very few training institutions exist in Malawi which offer an acceptable alternative to the university. As in any part of the world, universities are academic institutions that normally focus on research and education and the conferring of academic qualifications. There are however a vast number of potential learners who cannot follow this traditional route of learning and are looking for other acceptable education and training alternatives to satisfy their career aspirations. One such institution that does provide such an alternative is the Corporate Governance Training Centre in Malawi.

### **Corporate Governance Training Centre – an asset of Malawi**

In Malawi's education and training environment, the Corporate Governance Centre Limited (CGC), situated in Blantyre, is probably one of its most valuable assets. The founder and managing director of the CGC, Anthony John Makwumba, had a dream, a vision, and a passion for education and training and plenty of experience in the fields of accounting and auditing.

Apart from his professional qualifications, (he is a Certified Internal Auditor (CIA), Certified Financial Services Auditor (CFSA), Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), Certified Professional Environmental Auditor (CPEA)) he also holds a bachelors degree in Economics and has successfully completed several certificates in risk management and operational auditing.

This exceptional Malawian recognised the need for higher education and training in Malawi. He founded his company in October 2000, and since then, has rendered several assurance and consulting services – the fasted growing division – that of training and development.

The training centre opened its doors in 2000 to only a few students and hopes in 2006, to enrol in the region of 400 students. Up to eleven full-time trainers are employed to present a variety of internationally recognised courses and certificate programmes, including the Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) and Associate Certified Chartered Accountant (ACCA) programmes accredited by the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants, as well as the Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) programme accredited by the Institute of Internal Auditors Inc., (IIA).

The training centre follows an outcomes based education and training approach. The focus is on the competency of the learner – that is the *knowledge* obtained, the *skills* acquired and the *attitude* or behavioural characteristics displayed. This holistic approach to education and training contributes to the provision of competent and professional individuals who add value to the workplace.

An exciting new working relationship has been formed between the Department of Auditing at the University of Pretoria in South Africa and the Corporate Governance Training Centre in Blantyre. As the University's internal auditing programme is endorsed by the Institute of Internal Auditors Inc., it makes the Department of Auditing an attractive business partner for the CGC. Malawi has only three certified internal auditors (CIAs) at present, two of whom are connected to the CGC. Anthony Makwumba is one of the directors, and Mthusani Zungu is the operations manager of the CGC. Makwumba's vision is that the CGC will be a benchmark institution in providing internal auditing training in Malawi and will generate an increasing number of local CIAs. Negotiations with the Malawian government's internal auditors and other interested parties are in progress and a huge marketing campaign has been launched.

A formal agreement has been entered into between the CGC and the University of Pretoria, in terms of which the Corporate Governance Training Centre obtains the right to present the University's Endorsed Internal Auditing Programme to their students. A Train-the-Trainer course was held in

Malawi during June 2005 to ensure that the CGC's lecturers are competent and that their training facilities are adequate. Lecturers in internal auditing from the Department of Auditing were involved in the quality review and the Train-the-Trainer sessions. The Department of Auditing provides the training material, prepares all the assessments and examinations and is responsible for the marking of all test and examination scripts.

### **A brighter future for Africa**

The South African government has identified improvements in the areas of education and skills development as two of its key education policy priorities for its current term of office, implying an increased investment in education and training. If countries in Africa were to follow suit with similar policy and funding initiatives, it would enable dedicated individuals, like those working at, and graduating from CGC Ltd in Malawi, to climb the ladder of lifelong learning. In so doing, there would be a positive impact on education and skills development on the continent which in turn should speed up the achievement of the African Renaissance.