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*Article*

# Professional Skills Development for the Ghanaian International Trade Industry - Brief History of GIFF Education

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## ***Abstract***

*Just to borrow this popular mathematics phrase “without loss of generality” to prove a point, the Ghana Institute of Freight Forwarders (GIFF) knows the business of international freight/logistics to the core. More than that, the registered body for the Ghanaian freight forwarding industry also understand what it takes to deliver competency-based training that makes positive impact on the development and sustainability of the Ghanaian International trade, logistics and ports and maritime industry.*



Just to borrow this popular mathematics phrase "without loss of generality" to prove a point, the Ghana Institute of Freight Forwarders (GIFF) knows the business of international freight/logistics to the core. More than that, the registered body for the Ghanaian freight forwarding industry also understands what it takes to deliver competency-based training that makes positive impact on the development and sustainability of the Ghanaian International trade, logistics, ports and maritime industry. GIFF over the years has been shaping the industry through professional skills development at the major entry and exit points, building international trade industry capacity and delivering measurable success for participants and employers.

Whether taking part in a regular open course or benefitting from the customized experience of our in-house training, what participants learn is relevant to their industry, their region and their respective organizations. Ghana's vision is to become a major logistics centre in the West-Central African Sub-region. If Ghana is to become successful among other aspiring logistics centres in the sub-region, it is important to provide adequate infrastructure and sufficient manpower for the various services related to transportation of cargoes and logistics management. Also, individual companies must enhance the efficiency and quality of their services in order to survive in a competitive logistics business environment.

The Institute's training programmes are geared towards providing formal and systematic training to middle-level and front-line executives in the various services related to shipping, distribution, freight forwarding and logistics management to ensure they are equipped with the appropriate skills required for effective performance of

their jobs. The Institute also carries out other training programs for its members when needed particularly when new trade measures are introduced.

GIFF Education has a short past but a long history. This is because even though the department in its present form may have fully taken shape in 2005, institutionalized educational activities by GIFF, were born long ago. In 1990, the National Customs House Agents (NACHA) was transformed into GIFF to take care of the training needs of Freight Forwarders. This arose out of a felt need to set up an educational Institution for the training and mentorship of Freight Forwarders across the country. It is important to note that no Institution at the time had the mission to train Freight Forwarders. After the transformation of NACHA into GIFF in the early 90s, educational activities took the form of short course delivery and workshops for Clearing Agents. All attempts to run a fully-fledged educational programme could not materialize until the mid 90s when one Dr. Boye Ocansey and Mr. Olleenu from the Ministry of Trade stretched a helping hand. These Individuals aided the Institute to access a sponsorship package from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to run the course in conjunction with the Customs Excise and Preventive Service. Unfortunately, Customs management pulled out their lecturers because the MoU agreement with the Institute was not fully formalized.

In 2001, the Ghana Institute of Freight Forwarders decided to take advantage of the FIATA (Federation of International Association of Freight Forwarders) diploma in Freight Forwarding in order to initiate a more comprehensive educational programme. To this end, Course materials were developed and successfully validated at the headquarters session in Zurich,

Switzerland. The validation team was constituted by: Kofi Brako – President, Frank Sarpong – Vice President, Robert Kutin – Treasurer, Carlos Ahenkorah – Councillor, with Mrs. Joana Botchwey of the Regional Maritime University as the Consultant. In 2002, the GIFF National Executive council selected the Regional Maritime University (RMU) to run the diploma Course for the Institute due to lack of capacity. The attendees completed their course in 2004. In view of the huge fees charged by the RMU for running the course on behalf of GIFF, GIFF decided to run its own programme in 2005.

To this end, efforts were immediately made to build the capacity of GIFF. FIATA approved GIFF's application for the Training of Trainers and approved seed money of \$20,000 for the programme. In addition, FIATA sent in four of their very good lecturers namely: Thomas Sim of Singapore, Marcus Shoeni of Switzerland, Dr. Peter Wong from Hong Kong and Dr. Vincent Valentine from the United Kingdom to facilitate the "Train the Trainer" programme. The course was ran at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration in August 2005 as a full-time residential course for 35 attendees. Graduates of this "Train the Trainer" programme form the core of GIFF's lecturers today.

In May 2006, with the full collaboration of Customs Management, GIFF started the FIATA diploma course which includes the Customs proficiency module treated by CEPS training department. As per FIATA requirements, the course modules were re-validated in October 2007 at FIATA World Congress, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The validation team was constituted by David Nutakor and Captain William Amanhyia. The first batch of graduates passed out in August 2008, consisting of 60 students all of whom are engaged in the freight forwarding/logistics/haulage industry. In February 2009, the Certificate Course in Freight Forwarding was also introduced. The programme was intended to serve as an access course for applicants who for reason of low grades or inexperience in the freight industry cannot immediately access the diploma programme.

Also significant, is the initiative to run the programme in all districts of the Institute. In this direction, the programme has since August 2009 taken off at the Kotoka International Airport. Takoradi outlet took off in the year 2014. By the year 2015, GIFF Education was incorporated as GIFF Academy with its own Board led by Mr. Joseph Agbaga as GIFF President and Mr. Robert Dapaah as Head of Education. In the Year 2017 Mr. Jonathan Kwashie Amanor ascended the Education Manager seat and quickly pushed for the extension of GIFF training programmes to Elubo and Aflao districts. Several higher institutes of learning recognized GIFF Academy and therefore initiated a memorandum of

understanding with us. For instance, Our MoU with the University of Cape Coast allows FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding Holders and FIATA Higher Diploma in Supply Chain Management to pursue Bachelor of Commerce programme in Procurement and Supply chain Management at UCC (SOB) starting from levels 300 and 200 respectively.

GIFF Academy now has an e-learning facility to accommodate students from other district as well as GIFF members who are not able to attend face-to-face class; GIFF Academy e-Learning Portal: Log in to the site (moodle.school). Our FIATA Higher Diploma in supply chain Management program, has been successfully re-validated by FIATA via online in November 2021. The programme is still in session with a lot of attractive modules in Supply chain management tailor-made for industry (opportunity exit for those who wish to take the course via blended learning; a combination of e-learning and face-to face. Some of the short courses /training programmes offered include seminars on "Customs Procedure and Processes for Air and Ocean freights and GIFF Executive ICT Training Workshop, Tender Logistics, Heavy Lift Cargo handling, etc. The Academy has tailor-made courses which can be designed to suit every training need in the industry.

The Institute is accredited by FIATA to provide training in Certification in Dangerous Goods Regulation (Multimodal). GIFF Education is aggressively riding through the storms and growing from strength to strength through the years. Our forebearers had always envisaged that GIFF becomes a National Research and Consultancy Centre for facilitation of International Trade. This is the time!

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