

# VRA ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE | Volume 6: July – September 2016

Bridging the Competency Gap in the Energy Sector

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**LEARNING  
NEVER ENDS**

### Photo Gallery



DCE (Services) visit to VRA Academy



Transformer Maintenance Course  
July 18-22, 2016  
Lead Facilitator: Peter Mensa Barnes



Staff Durbar



Team Building and Development Course  
August 2-4, 2016  
Lead facilitator: Joana Bartels



APUA delegates touring VRA Academy facilities



Basic Excel Course  
August 8-12, 2016  
Lead facilitator: Prince Tawiah

Bridging the Competency Gap in the Energy Sector

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:** All end of course training reports from course Participants, non-VRA Facilitators and Part-Time Trainers should be directed to: [mgr.nontech@vra.com](mailto:mgr.nontech@vra.com) (For Non-Technical Programmes) / [mgr.tech@vra.com](mailto:mgr.tech@vra.com) (For Technical Programmes)

**Events**

**DCE (Services) Visit to VRA Academy**



Deputy Chief Executive (Services) & Chief Learning Officer

The Deputy Chief Executive (Services) met the Management of the VRA Academy on Wednesday, July 27, 2016. The purpose of the visit was for the DCE to acquaint himself with the current business operations of the VRA Academy and learn at first hand the potentials and challenges facing the Academy.

DCE (Services) assured VRA Academy of management commitment to the establishment and operationalization of the Academy. DCE (Services) also stressed the importance of departments working in a relationship of shared value and shared responsibility for effective results.

VRA Academy is putting in place measures to attract external clients within the sub region. This is because the VRA Academy among its potentials has the ability to provide technical training to industries within the sub-region

**Staff Durbar**



From left: Mr. Nicholas H. Agbeli, Principal Training Officer, Mrs. Joana Bartels, Principal Training Officer & Mrs. Efua Garbrah-Sarfo Chief Learning Officer

As part of strengthening staff engagement and addressing concerns of staff, the Management of VRA Academy held a Durbar for staff on July 26, 2016.

The purpose of the durbar was to discuss strategic direction, problems and know the way forward.

The durbar gave staff the opportunity to ask questions and discuss concerns with management.

Staff offered creative solutions directly to Management. Self-development was among the issues discussed.

The Chief Learning Officer reminded staff of the need for continuous learning and urged staff to take the opportunity to develop themselves.

Staff were also encouraged to practise the core values of the Academy which are: “Professionalism, Integrity, Safety, Accountability and Continuous learning”.

They were also advised to work hard to ensure that the Academy becomes a Training Centre of choice in Africa and beyond by 2018.

**APUA delegates visited the VRA Academy**



APUA Delegates being conducted round VRA Academy facility

35 APUA delegates visited the VRA Academy on Friday, July 15, 2016 as part of post-conference tour to some VRA Facilities in Akuse.

The purpose for hosting the delegates was to sell the VRA Academy as an exciting Engineering and Leadership Training destination in West Africa and beyond.

The delegates were presented with the Academy’s products and Services. Other issues such as the Academy’s strategic focus including support from donor agencies/organizations were also discussed during the presentation.

The friendly atmosphere gave the delegates the opportunity to interact one on one with staff of the VRA Academy. They were also shown round the training facility to see things for themselves.



Presentation by the Chief Learning Officer to APUA delegates and staff of VRA Academy



APUA delegates interacting with staff

The 50th Annual Meetings of the Association of Power Utilities in Africa (APUA) was held in Accra from July 12 - July 15, 2016 at the Movenpick Ambassador Hotel.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Chief Learning Officer and Mr. Nicholas H. Agbeli, Principal Training Officer on Tuesday, July 12, 2016.

**Meeting with Malian Officials**



From left: Mr. Kante Abubakar (Director, HR EDM), Mr. George Koranteng (Director HR, VRA), Jane Acquah (Manager, Training and Succession Management, VRA ), Mr. Mathieu Kone (Director PR & Communication EDM) Efua Garbrah-Sarfo (Mrs) (Chief Learning Officer, VRA) and Mr. Nicholas Agbeli (Principal Training Officer, VRA Academy)

The Chief Learning Officer, Mrs Efua Garbrah-Sarfo; Nicholas H. Agbeli, Principal Training Officer of VRA Academy and Director, Human Resources and Manager,

**Bridging the Competency Gap in the Energy Sector**

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Training and Succession Management of the Human Resources Department met two Malian Officials from Energie du Mali (EDM) on July 14, 2016 at the Movenpick Hotel in Accra.

The meeting was to discuss and agree on the concept and parameters for the implementation of Functional English Program for EDM Management Staff.

The collaboration will strengthen the relation between the Volta River Authority and Energie du Mali (EDM).

#### Meeting with ANCEE Representatives ANCEE: African Networks of Centres of Excellence in Electricity

The African Network of Centres of Excellence in Electricity (ANCEE) for the development of skills and governance is an initiative that pools resources for the training of members of the Association of Power Utilities of Africa (APUA), with the aim of addressing the pressing capacity building needs of the African power sector.

The initiative was launched by the General Secretariat of the Association of Power Utilities of Africa (APUA), with support from the African Development Bank, in collaboration with the French Development Agency.

ANCEE was officially established on 12 December 2013 by Resolution-2, adopted at the 47th APUA General Assembly

On July 14, 2016, Management of the Academy and HR Department met with ANCEE Coordinator to elicit clarification on ANCEE membership of top eight (8) Centres of Excellence (COE) and also to clear the apprehension by the Academy regarding the mode of selecting Centres of Excellence members.

#### Training Events

##### 1. Transformer Maintenance August 8-12, 2016

#### Course objectives:

This course aims at imparting to the participants, the practical knowledge and understanding of the operations of the major cost item of the substation - the transformer, and the attitudes and skills needed to inspect, maintain, overhaul, test and troubleshoot faults on it.

#### Target group:

Newly employed Electrical Maintenance Staff

##### 2. Transmission Line Maintenance July 18-22, 2016

#### Course objective:

To equip participants with knowledge and skills in the various test and measurement carried out on the Transmission Lines.

#### Target group:

Transmission Line Maintenance Engineers/Technician Engineers

##### 3. Power System Stability July 18-22, 2016

#### Course objective:

To equip participants with the relevant knowledge and skill in interpreting and applying the GRID CODE in achieving Power System Stability on the National Inter-connected Transmission System.

#### Target group:

System Operating Engineers and Technician Engineers

##### 4. Team Building and Development August 2-4, 2016

#### Programme objective:

To develop the knowledge and skills of participants for a better understanding of how the dynamics of an individual in the team could be used to the best advantage of the section.

**Target group:** Managers, Supervisors and Officers who have functional roles of leading and managing work teams.

##### 5. Basic Excel August 8-12, 2016

#### Course objective:

The introductory Excel training course sought to provide participants with a working understanding of the basic features of MS Excel, Confidence to use Excel on a daily basis and Knowledge of functions and formulae to save time and reduce workload

**Target group:** All cadres of staff who use computers as part of their work activities.

##### 6. Report Writing Skills July 18-22, 2016

#### Course objective:

To develop modern skills to write a well-organized, well-structured report

**Target group:** Managers, Supervisors and all cadres of staff who write reports as part of their work activities.

## Participants' Corner



### What are participants saying?

"The facilitator is extremely good and we would wish he handles the intermediate training

-**Microsoft Access**

"I have learnt a lot that I made a lot of mistakes. I learnt about investment, building and how to manage my Estate"

-**Pre-Retirement Seminar**

"The trainer is commended for satisfactory work done"

-**Transformer Maintenance**

"The training was very good, we have been enlightened on the job so much that next time we are going to carry out a project like this we will do it better "

-**Distribution Substation Pole Mount**

"Course content very relevant to my job function. The course duration was however, short. Duration should be extended at least 5 days to enable participants undertake more exercises

-**Project Finance Appraisal Modeling in Excel**

"Course is highly recommended for fresh intakes and staff at the point of entry into the Authority

-**Work Ethics and Core Values**

Send your Requests for the 2016 training brochure to:  
[info.academy@vra.com](mailto:info.academy@vra.com)

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"I want my résumé to be the one you remember. It's also available as a music video, interpretive dance, and a haiku."



"This list of excuses, for not having your homework, looks surprisingly like a list of reasons for not being successful when you get a job."



As a carpenter went home after shutting down his workshop, a black poisonous cobra entered his workshop. The cobra was hungry and hoped to find its supper lurking somewhere within. It slithered from one end to another and accidentally bumped into a double-edged metal axe and got very slightly injured. In anger and seeking revenge, the snake bit the axe with full force. What could a bite do to a metallic axe? Instead the cobra's mouth started bleeding.

Out of fury and arrogance, the cobra tried its best to strangle and kill the object that was causing it pain by wrapping itself very tightly around the blades. The next day when the carpenter opened the workshop, he found a seriously cut, dead cobra wrapped around the axe blades. The cobra died not because of someone else's fault but faced these consequences merely because of its own anger and wrath.

Sometimes when angry, we try to cause harm to others but as time passes by, we realise that we have caused more harm to ourselves. For a happy life, it's best we should learn to ignore and overlook some things, people, incidents, affairs and matters. It is not necessary that we show a reaction to everything. Step back and ask yourself if the matter is really worth responding or reacting to.

People that show no inclination to change are best handled with silence and prayer.

**UNDERSTANDING HOLDING COMPANY**

By Eric Mensah Bonsu  
VRA Academy, Akuse

The term Holding Company comes from the fact that business has one job to "HOLD" their investments. Holding Company is a special type of business that doesn't do anything itself.

Instead, it owns investment such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, gold, silver, real estate, arts, copyrights license, private business or virtually anything of value. Many modern day corporations such as General Electric (GE) or Bank of America are examples of Holding Companies. Holding Company can come from two forms.

1. Holding Companies that serve as investment vehicle for investors
2. Holding Companies that serves as risk management tool for large corporations

**How can you form a Holding Company?**

Imagine you are part of a group of friends that decides to invest together. You think a holding company is your best vehicle so you decide to form one.

You incorporate a new business called Zebang Ultimate Group by filling the document with registrar General's Department and paying a lawyer to draw up the operating agreement, all of which may cost less than GHC 400.00.

Assuming there are 10 members in the group each of whom write a cheque for GHC 100,000.00 to the new holding

Company's bank account in exchange for 10% ownership.

Once everyone's contribution is received, the Holding Company has the simplest balance sheet.

Asset (GHC):           GHC 1 million  
Liabilities =           (GHC) None  
Member Equity (Book Value) = GHC1 million  
You can therefore use the GHC 1 million to control GHC 50 million or more without a lot of risk.

First of all if the group decides they want to build GHC 2 million apartment/hostel for an institution, they then create a new company called Akuse Apartments Company and contributes GHC 200,000 in cash and write the operation agreement so that other investors can buy GHC 1,500,000 (3/4), and a bank can provide GHC 300,000 in debt financing through a secured non-recourse mortgage.

The operating agreement require that 5% of rents be paid to a business called Zebang Property Managing Company which is another new subsidiary of the holding company formed to maintain and manage the apartments.

In effect, the group is using only 10% of its assets, or GHC 200,000 to control GHC 2 million apartment building. They are receiving 33% of ownership in building plus 5% rents.

They could then start making investments in other viable companies taking minority stakes, buying stocks, launching new companies etc. they could even create mutual fund adviser and manage hundreds of millions of Cedis on a tiny investments. If one of the investments fails, the others are isolated.

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Example of a structure of a holding company for a power Generating Company.

#### Zebang Power Holding Company

- Zebang Real Estate (the building and Real Estate)
- Zebang Oil and Equipment (the Oil facilities and equipment)
- Zebang Human Services (Employees)
- Zebang Financial Services (Financial, Loans)
- Zebang Power Company (the operating company)

All of the subsidiaries would be owned by a holding company, but Zebang Power Company would be the traditional business company. It just that it will pay a fee to lease employees from the Human Service subsidiary, equipment from equipment subsidiary, the building from Real Estate etc. if an employee sue the company, only the Human Services business would be at risk.

#### Summary

A Holding Company is any regular corporation that owns investments in other companies but doesn't engage in any operations itself. That is, Zebang Power Holding Company would not do anything. Instead, it will own 80% stock of Zebang Power Company which is the operating company.

It will own 90% of Zebang Financial Services, 50% of Zebang Oil and Equipment, 60% of Zebang Human Services and 50% of Zebang Real Estate. It can be used to "Silo" investment assets and protect them and can permit you to structure deals so you control far more money than you otherwise could afford.

In essence a Holding Company is in the business of providing capital and people.

*I hope this will help you understand the concept of Holding Company*

#### CAN ELECTRICITY BE STORED WITH POWER BANKS?

##### By Kwesi Eyson, VRA Academy, Akuse

Isaac Newton, the famous scientist, was said to have discovered the 'force of gravity' or the force of attraction between two bodies by accident when an apple tragically fell on his head and dazed him momentarily.

But instead of blaming the witches and wizards in his house, as many of us in

Ghana would have done, he rather set himself thinking: 'Why did the apple fall?' 'What made it fall?'

He tried to find answers to these questions and ended up making the discovery which is today applied in science in important areas such as aircraft manufacturing, space exploration and even sports.

An accident which happened in Accra a year ago also set me thinking like Isaac Newton. A young school girl was electrocuted when she over charged her 'power bank' with electricity.

Though sad and unfortunate because an innocent life was lost, it rather gave me food for thought: 'What is a power bank?' 'How does it work?' 'Can electricity be stored?'

Like Isaac Newton, I tried to find answers to these questions and what I discovered can turn round the current ill-fortunes of the VRA in no time if it can be applied.

Explaining the nature of the power bank to me, an Electrical Engineer with the VRA in Akuse said: "In today's world, we use various electrical or electronic devices on day-to-day basis such as mobile phones and tablets"

"The problem with these powerful devices is that they consume a lot of energy and can drain their own batteries in such a short time. The power bank is an external battery charger or recharger which is used to energize these devices back to life and prolong their usage".

According to the Engineer, power banks come in different styles and specifications. When buying a power bank it is advisable to pick one which has the output voltage and current equal to or higher than the battery or charger specifications of your electronic device.

If indeed electricity can be stored, then VRA can benefit greatly by producing and

storing electricity in power banks so that it can be retailed directly to consumers without relying on GRIDCO and ECG to do the distribution. This would put more money into VRA's empty pockets.

I was actually thinking of power banks being used to power our television sets, fans, air-conditioners, electric irons, radios, cookers, fridges and sound systems - in fact all our domestic electrical appliances including the lighting systems.

I was even looking forward to the day when we will be using 'scratch cards' to re-charge our electrical devices.

Unfortunately, as the Engineer added, the exciting concept of storing electricity so as to retail it to consumers without distribution lines is not going to be possible now as the power bank itself needs electricity to re-charge.

So then we are back to square one. But I will continue to dream about it happening one day.

#### BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION THROUGH EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

##### By Godfred K. Nyarkoh, VRA Academy, Akuse

An organization can be seen as a living organism evolving from time to time. We often describe an organization as an entity but if an organism evolves then how does an organization grow?

The truth is that whenever we talk about organizations one word that comes to mind is actually their employees. Employees therefore play a key role in every organization.

Employees actually direct affairs of the organization. No organization can achieve its strategic goals without the commitment and hard work of its employees.

Training and Development is therefore an essential tool for organization's success. It is important to ensure that employees' skills, abilities and knowledge levels are being regularly updated.

For example, enrolling employees in in-house or external (Public) programmes where they can network with their peers at different organizations and across industries, they are provided with the forum to test ideas in a safe environment and discuss ideas and best practices that they can bring back to their organization.

Another critical step is to have a laid down plan for the transfer of knowledge back at the organization. This will motivate staff to implement what they have learnt from their training right away at their workplace.

However, this can be achieved if a common language and frameworks are implemented across the organization and ensuring there is fairness, transparency and consistency in the approach.

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In whatever form it may take (in-house or external), the training must identify and address competency gaps necessary for the survival of the organization.

Because of its importance, most companies/Institutions have established their own training and Development Department/Universities including VRA Academy (VRA), Electricity Company of Ghana Training Center (ECG), Ghana Civil Aviation Training Academy (Ghana Civil Aviation Authority) and Ghana Telecom University College (Ghana Telecom) etc.

#### How does it benefit organizations?

- 1. Productivity:** organizations that regularly update employees through training equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their work to the best of their abilities, thus increasing productivity and quality of work.
- 2. Competitive advantage:** The right employee training can give a genuine competitive advantage over competition. For an organization to be better than the rest, its employees must be better and training is a direct route to achieving this.
- 3. Positive Change:** Things continuously change at the workplace but through regular training employees are not left out; instead, they stay working harder and achieving targets, resulting in positive change.
- 4. Positive Reputation:** with a highly skilled labor at the employer's disposal, the organisation is able to deliver higher levels of customer satisfaction therefore boosting reputation in the marketplace and helping to secure customer loyalty.

In addition, not only can training help the employer retain best employees, but by being an employer that value and demonstrates a commitment to staff development makes your organisation more attractive when it comes to recruiting subject matter experts.

- 5. Employee engagement:** regular training of employees boost their performance therefore increasing staff retention and helping employer maintain key players.

It is imperative for organizations to include training and development in their priority list.

This is because employers' greatest assets are their employees. So, while we upgrade our plants, equipment and tools, we must also renew individual skills sets, advance our teams and gradually equip them with what they need to know to remain competitive and work hard to their best abilities.

The 21st century global market is highly competitive and constantly evolving, the organizations which invest in employee training and development are the ones that will survive at the end.

### HEALTH HAZARDS OF SITTING FOR TOO LONG



"Even if you do a half an hour or an hour of exercise every day doesn't give us the reassurance that sitting for the other 23 hours is ok. In fact, it's not," said Dr. David Alter of the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, one of the authors of the study.

The study, published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* show that the health hazards seem to be greatest for people who sit 8 or 9 hours a day. The impact was even more pronounced in people who did not exercise regularly.

According to Bonnie Berkowitz and Patterson Clark the following are some of the health hazards of prolonged sitting:

#### ORGAN DAMAGE

##### Heart Disease

Muscles burn less fat and blood flows more sluggishly during a long sit, allowing fatty acids to more easily clog the heart. Prolonged sitting has been linked to high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol,

and people with the most sedentary time are more than twice as likely to have cardiovascular disease as those with the least.

#### Overproductive Pancreas

The pancreas produces insulin, a hormone that carries glucose to cells for energy. But cells in idle muscles don't respond as readily to insulin, so the pancreas produces more and more, this can lead to diabetes and other diseases.

#### MUSCLE DEGENERATION

##### Mushy Abs

When you stand, move or even sit up straight, abdominal muscles keep you upright. But when you slump in a chair, they go unused. Tight back muscles and wimpy abs form a posture-wrecking alliance that can exaggerate the spine's natural arch, a condition called hyperlordosis, or swayback.

##### Tight Hips

Flexible hips help keep you balanced, but chronic sitters so rarely extend the hip flexor muscles in front that they become short and tight, limiting range of motion and stride length. Studies have found that decreased hip mobility is a main reason elderly people tend to fall.

##### Limp Glutes

Sitting requires your glutes to do absolutely nothing, and they get used to it. Soft glutes hurt your stability, your ability to push off and your ability to maintain a powerful stride

#### BAD BACK

##### Inflexible Spine

When we move, soft discs between vertebrae expand and contract like sponges, soaking up fresh blood and nutrients. But when we sit for a long time, discs are squashed unevenly. Collagen hardens around tendons and ligaments.

##### Disk Damage

People who sit more are at greater risk for herniated lumbar disks. A muscle called the

psoas travels through the abdominal cavity and, when it tightens, pulls the upper lumbar spine forward. Upper-body weight rests entirely on the ischial tuberosity (Sitting bones) instead of being distributed along the arch of the spine.

#### LEG DISORDERS

##### Poor Circulation in Legs

Sitting for long periods of time slows blood circulation, which causes fluid to pool in

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the legs. Problems range from swollen ankles and varicose veins to dangerous blood clots called deep vein thrombosis (DVT).

### Soft Bones

Weight-bearing activities such as walking and running stimulate hip and lower-body bones to grow thicker, denser and stronger. Scientists partially attribute the recent surge in cases of osteoporosis to lack of activity.

### TROUBLE AT THE TOP

#### Strained Neck

If most of your sitting occurs at a desk at work, craning your neck forward toward a keyboard or tilting your head to cradle a

phone while typing can strain the cervical vertebrae and lead to permanent imbalances.

### The right way to sit

If you have to sit often, try to do it correctly. As Mom always said, "Sit up straight."



- ◆ Not leaning forward
- ◆ Shoulders relaxed
- ◆ Arms close to sides
- ◆ Elbows bent 90°
- ◆ Lower back may be supported
- ◆ Feet flat on floor

In addition, get and take a few steps every 30 minutes or so, to improve your health

## Upcoming Courses

### September 2016

Course Title	Date	Facilitator/Coordinator	Contact
1. Oracle Financials	September 1-30, 2-16	-Kingsley Gyamfi	kingsley.gyamfi@vra.com
2. Oracle for Auditors	September 5-9, 2016	-Alfred Okang	afred.okang@vra.com
3. Project Management Prince2	September 5-7, 2016	-Joana Bartels	joana.Essilfie@vra.com
4. Occupational Health, Safety & Environment	September 6-08/27-29	-Samuel Yirenkyi Addo	samuel.yaddo@vra.com
5. Transformer Maintenance	September 12-16, 2016	-Peter Mensah Barnes	peter.mensah-barnes@vra.com
6. Record Management	August 29 –September 2, 2016	-Kingsley Gyamfi	kingsley.gyamfi@vra.com
7. Business Planning and Budgeting	August 29 – September 2, 2016	-Kingsley Gyamfi	kingsley.gyamfi@vra.com
8. Leadership Development Programme	September 13-16/27-30, 2016	-Rita Sosuh	rita.obiri@vra.com
9. Standard Protection Code Project	September 12-16, 2016	-Samuel Yirenkyi Addo	samuel.yaddo@vra.com
10. Performance Management	September 28-30, 2016	-Kingsley Gyamfi	kingsley.gyamfi@vra.com
11. Negotiation Skills	September 22-23, 2016	-Joana Bartels	joana.Essilfie@vra.com
12. Rigging (Basic/Intermediate)	September 19-23/26-30, 2016	-Robertson N.O Okpoti	robert.okpoti@vra.com
13. Introduction to Geospatial Technology	September 19 -23, 2016	-Lucas Burgesson	lucas.rburgesson@vra.com
14. Energy Seminar	September 20-22, 2016	-Samuel Yirenkyi Addo	samuel.yaddo@vra.com
15. Steam Turbine Operation	September 26-30, 2016	-David Oturoku	david.oturoku@vra.com
16. Effective Presentation	September 26-28, 2016	-Joana Bartels	joana.Essilfie@vra.com

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