Towards a Compact for Ghana's Political
and Economic Transformation

YOUTH, EDUCATION, AND SKILLS:

Key Priorities and Approaches
in Support of a Compact

Technical Background Paper

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Contents

Ghana has a young age composition, with more than one-third of its population under the age of 15. It has a youth unemployment rate of 12.1 percent.[1] Based on historical averages, out of about 360,000 secondary school students who graduated in 2020, only 35 percent are likely to transit to the tertiary level, leaving close to 240,000 in search of jobs. Fewer than 100,000 will secure decent formal sector jobs. This situation is primarily due to a difficult transition for young people from school to the job market, which is jeopardizing the country's long-term economic and political stability. The Compact will offer Ghana an opportunity to reach consensus on medium-term priorities in education and skills development, youth employment and youth leadership.

In this note, we highlight key concerns around youth, education, and skills that should be prioritized in the Compact for Ghana's Political and Economic Transformation. We also offer suggestions on areas of focus and indicate a suggested methodology/approach in line with the wider Compact process in finalizing the Youth paper. It also includes a timeline of activities.

Key Area 1: Education and skills

The current administration has made considerable progress in reforming the education system, particularly secondary education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), building on the progress made by previous administrations. In 2017, the current administration introduced a Free Secondary Education policy which, according to the President of Ghana, "…*will lift the financial burden off our parents….and the heart-rending anxiety that accompanies the beginnings of every school term".[2]* And while the free SHS policy has led to a surge in enrolment, limited space to absorb the increase led to the introduction in oversubscribed schools of the double-track system in the 2018/2019 academic year. However, much less success has been achieved in improving the quality and alignment of education and training to labor market requirements. While the government's policy places greater emphasis on delivery of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, in practice non-STEM subjects constitute a larger part of content delivery, again partly attributed to resource constraints.

Similarly, with regard to TVET, despite the government's drive to increase uptake, the sector still suffers from poor public perception, a fragmented landscape and poor investment. Furthermore, not all public TVET institutions are free. Only 3 percent of public funding for the education sector is allocated to TVET and less than 3 percent is allocated to special education and non-formal education (MOE, 2018b). Thus, it is a welcome proposition that the government *"….is repositioning the entire education system to produce a critical mass of*

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[1] UNESCO 2019

[2] The "free" element of the policy refers to free tuition, admission, library fees, facilities fees such as ICT, examination fees, boarding and meals. https://africaeducationwatch.org/alert/the-cost-of-free-shs.

assertive and empowered Ghanaian population with relevant skills for socioeconomic transformation"[3].

Key challenges

1. The implementation of the Free SHS and TVET program

While the introduction of **Free SHS/TVET program** has come to stay, its **implementation** has generated considerable criticism and disagreement across the political divide. The following key issues are highlighted:

a) *The pace of implementation of the program. S*ome stakeholders are of the view that implementation has been hasty, and was undertaken without adequate preparation, compromising quality and effectiveness. For instance, the policy was implemented without proper key stakeholder consultations and was rolled out without a comprehensive policy document aside from the Budget statement and the State of the Nation Address (SONA).

b) *The double-track system.* One of the immediate challenges arising from the hasty implementation of the free SHS program was an increase in the student-teacher ratio, revealing the deficit in the number of teachers, which called for the introduction of the double-track system. Under this system, students and staff are divided into two tracks (groups): the Green track (the first group) and the Gold track (the second group). While one track is in school for 81 days, the other track will be on vacation for 41 days and vice versa. However, critics argue that the system was introduced without adequate consultation among key stakeholders, compromising quality and effectiveness.

c) *Gender and vulnerable groups.* There are concerns that the free SHS/TVET policy and program do not adequately address the issue of *inclusiveness, particularly of girls, other vulnerable groups, and underserved communities*. While progress has been made regarding access to education, high numbers of children remain out of school. Many disadvantaged students do not complete junior high school (JHS) and are therefore not eligible for free SHS. In the Upper West Region, around 60 percent of children entering primary school drop out before the last year of JHS. In the Northern Region, this proportion reaches 70 percent (Leclercq et al., 2017). For those who make it to SHS, the double-track system may increase the probability that they drop out of school, as it reduces the total time spent in school during the year. Female students are at increased risk of dropping out under this system. Furthermore, a high number of students are placed but not enrolled. Many disadvantaged students do not enroll due to the hidden costs of secondary schooling, including long commutes to school. There

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[3] Minister of Education Power Point presentation on the preparation for the 2018/2019 academic year of the free SHS program, 2018
4. Ibid.

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are 4,194 community primary schools without JHS and even more communities without SHS; most such communities are among the most deprived and disadvantaged. To benefit from the Free SHS policy, many students need boarding facilities to avoid long commutes, which puts additional pressure on the limited accommodation. Students who are offered school places as day students without considering the proximity to their homes are often forced to rent nearby private hostel accommodation out-of-pocket, which becomes a prohibitive cost for disadvantaged students. In many cases, the cost of rented hostels exceeds the Free SHS subsidy. Further hidden costs include purchasing equipment and tools for students in technical and vocational courses.

d) *Sustainability and financing of Free SHS.* One of the contentious aspects of the policy is its financial sustainability. The policy was designed to be financed from the nation's oil revenues via the Legacy Fund. It currently costs about 2,312 for each SHS student with an estimated 1.2 million students covered by the policy. Government expenditure on secondary education now exceeds expenditure towards basic education. In the 2019 budget, about GH¢1.682 billion was earmarked for the implementation of Free SHS, with over 90 percent going towards school fees, and a little over 1 percent towards physical infrastructure. The mode of financing of the policy is arguably risky and unsustainable. Some stakeholders have argued that a targeted, means-tested approach (if done properly and transparently) would be better than the current blanket approach. This would reduce the cost of the policy while ensuring only students who need it are covered, freeing up funds to expand infrastructure and improve much needed coverage to TVET institutions and the provision of tools and equipment. Others have argued for the removal of free boarding school from the current overall structure, arguing that boarding fees should be provided on the basis of need.

2. Issues with TVET

Ghana is reforming its technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system with the aim of forming a highly skilled workforce capable of supporting local industrial development and contributing to sustainable growth of the country. However TVET remains the disadvantaged 'step-child' of the education system, despite its potential for transformation and job creation. There exists a free TVET intervention under the Free SHS program. The policy as of January 2022 only covered 47 Ghana Education Service (GES) technical and vocational institutes (TVIs) out of the 129 public TVIs. However, beginning from February 2022, the government announced that all TVET institutions would now be captured under the Ghana TVET Service and would be free for all[4].

The use of a one-cap-fits-all costing framework for all SHS and TVIs under the Free SHS policy has created an unrealistic and inadequate financing requirement for free TVET in GES TVIs.

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[4] https://ctvet.gov.gh/free-tvet-begins-next-year-bawumia/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=free-tvet-begins-next-year-bawumia#:~:text=So%20far%2C%20all%20TVET%20Institutions,TVET%2FSHS%20FOR%20ALL%E2%80%9D.

The unrealistic costing parameters omit critical inputs that are essential ingredients in instruction and learning. For instance, even though school uniforms, house jerseys, church cloths are provided under the Free SHS policy, personal protective equipment are not covered. These include overcoats, overalls, safety boots, goggles and other essential safety gadgets required for practical work at TVI workshops. Learners are therefore obliged to either finance the cost of procuring these essentials or risk participating in the courses without adequate protection. Once again this could serve as a prohibitive cost for the most deprived students or serve as a disincentive for enrolling in TVI despite the relatively higher promise of jobs after completion.

Furthermore, TVET uptake is still hampered by the poor public perception of the sector and is often seen as a place for people who are academically weak. According to the World Bank, most formal TVET providers are operating below capacity because young people are not motivated to go into TVET.

3. Inadequate physical and digital infrastructure

The education sector, particularly at secondary level, faces chronically inadequate physical and digital infrastructure, a situation exacerbated by increased enrollment due to Free SHS. The commitment to expand physical infrastructure has not kept at par with enrollment. Where expansion has occurred, the focus has been on increasing the number of places in existing secondary schools, leaving many deprived districts without access to adequate secondary education facilities. Similarly, digital infrastructure is weak, with only 50 percent of regular secondary schools and 25 percent of technical schools having access to the internet. This limits the ability of teachers and students to use digital tools and access relevant information, contributing to poor learning outcomes. Having computers in schools but no internet service limits the ability of both students and teachers to access relevant information. It is important to note that this is an ongoing cost that many schools have no budget for.

4. Weak teacher training curricula

Regarding teacher training, we note the recent revolutionary policy that requires every teacher to have a degree level of education, which has increased the number of trained teachers. For the education system in Ghana to be able to achieve its goals, it has to ensure teachers receive quality education and systematic support for professional growth must be a priority. Teacher training policy frameworks in Ghana stress that teacher-training curricula shall be competency based. However, in reality, curriculum and assessment methods currently used for teacher training are highly exam-focused, with little room for the development of good teaching skills. The curriculum is congested and has a limited focus on critical skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy and is disconnected from the curricula taught in schools.

Potential solutions

The following solutions are recommended for review under the Compact:

1. *Ensuring Free SHS is inclusive* by exploring a variety of options, including:

   (i) Decentralizing the Free SHS (FSHS) program so that students attend SHS in their own locality. Building more community senior secondary schools and TVET institutions should be targeted as a medium- to long-term solution to the shortage of infrastructure. This would ensure proximity and easier access to schools, especially in rural areas, potentially reducing the number of boarding facilities demanded and freeing much needed space in boarding schools to improve teaching and learning. This approach rethinks public schools as hubs for all communities, with considerable attention placed on the enhancement of the physical structures of schools, rigorous educational programs, provision of adequate teaching and learning materials and hiring qualified personnel including teachers to help run the affairs of schools. The US for instance has around 5,000 community schools with evidence indicating that a US$1 investment in such schools generates an additional US$12 to US$15 in social value (Abel , 2018)[5].

   (ii) Addressing issues of equity with regard to boarding schools by rethinking the blanket free-boarding school-for-all policy. Provision of free boarding should be limited to underprivileged students who need it the most.

   (iii) Exploring innovative approaches to learning, including distance learning. According to Barron Rodriguez et al., (2021)[6], remote/multimodal systems of education delivery are effective if complemented with a clear communication strategy and contextualization based on the needs of the specific localities. A clear case is the multimodal delivery system in Brazil. This system has been successful in reaching a higher percentage of students because it has been

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[5] Abel , M. (2018, August 22). *Building Community Schools Systems Removing Barriers to Success in U.S. Public Schools*. Retrieved from americanprogress.org: https://www.americanprogress.org/article/building-community-schools-systems/#:~:text=There%20are%20roughly%205%2C000%20community,to%20%2415%20in%20social%20value

[6] Barron Rodriguez, M., Cobo, C., Munoz-Najar, A., & Sanchez Ciarrusta, I. (2021). Remote Learning During the Global School Lockdown: Multi-Country Lessons. *Remote Learning During the Global School Lockdown*.

Dardak, R., Nik, R., & Haimid, T. (2020). Youth and Agro technopreneurship ecosystem in Malaysia. *FFTC Agricultural Policy*.

Palmer, R. (2018). *Jobs and Skills Mismatch Informal Economy October 2017* (Issue October). http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_629018.pdf

Van Gyampo, R. E. (2015). Youth in Parliament and Youth Representation in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909613511941

complemented with (a) increased awareness among teachers and families of learning activities through advertisements on TV and social media; (b) a task force responsible for reaching families of students who are out of reach; and (c) daily communication between teachers and the State Education Secretary. Remote approaches have also been tested as a viable method of reintegrating dropouts or helping students who are out of school to catch up on their education. However, it should be noted that for distance learning to work investments need to be made in improving internet connectivity, access to devices such as mobile phones for distance learning, quality of content, teachers' preparedness and prior experience. In Africa, Sierra Leonne complemented the remote/multimodal delivery system by implementing a radio learning program. This was instituted by the Teaching Service Commission with the help of the Ministry of Information and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, which invested in infrastructure such as radio studios for the program.

2. *Rethinking the financing of Free SHS.* A more sustainable mode of finance is required for the Free SHS program, one not tied to oil revenues that could very easily dry up as the world gravitates towards green economies. Furthermore, there should be structured stakeholder consultations to rethink how we implement the policy in a more progressive manner to ensure it is reaching those who need it the most. Perhaps there should be means-testing, such that middle- and high-income earners who do not necessarily need the free secondary education revert to paying fees while low-income earners and deprived families who need it the most continue to benefit from the program.

3. *Improving the quality and relevance of education and training.* The Ghana Education Service introduced a new curriculum in the 2019/2020 academic year that is expected to provide students with skills, both soft and hard, to allow them to navigate the modern world and its inherent challenges. Despite the reforms, the ACET study notes that the secondary school curriculum is still poorly aligned with the changing nature of work. The SHS curriculum has limited practical content and young people often gain technical and theoretical knowledge without the ability to implement in practice what they have learnt. This is often as a result of poor infrastructure and access to key learning tools such as functioning computers, stable electricity and well-equipped STEM laboratories. Curriculum gaps can be addressed by fostering greater cooperation between secondary schools and the private sector to be able to better match the curriculum with the needs of industry. Representatives from industry must be engaged with the curriculum design and review process in a more deliberate and structured manner and not in a tokenistic way, as is currently done.

4. *Improve representation of girls in STEM education.* One of the difficulties faced by girls and women is their **under-representation or inadequate access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses.** Traditionally, these subjects are dominated by boys and men. An attempt to eliminate this problem requires a concerted effort between the government and researchers. For instance, in an attempt to boost girls' participation in STEM-related courses in secondary schools and at tertiary levels, the UNESCO office in Accra and other partners including the Ghana Education Service, have implemented STEM clinics in some districts. The first STEM clinic was held in the Jasikan district, which is one of the districts with the lowest girls' participation in STEM.

In addition, the University of Ghana Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (UG-GMES) and Africa Project at the College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS) launched a Women in Tech campaign to encourage more girls to take STEM courses. While these efforts are commendable, we advocate that the projects must not be concentrated in few selected areas only but must cut across all secondary schools within the country and across all districts. Another example is the International Labour Organization (ILO) Women in STEM workforce program in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. The program aims at providing women with essential STEM-related skills to increase their employability, improve productivity and enhance careers. The program has successfully trained over 500 women in the Philippines, and 1,000 low-skilled women in Thailand have also been reskilled through technical programs. With respect to financial resources, the ILO Women in STEM workforce program has been complemented with the ILO WOMENCANDOIT Scholarship for women in TVET who are studying animation, game development and web development. The scholarship has been successful in attracting thousands of people on social media. As a result, more than 200 women have graduated from the program, with 30 percent taking jobs in information technology and the business process management sectors (United Nations Children's Fund, ITU, 2020)[7].

5. *Bolstering and promoting TVET.* While noting the recent expansion of the free SHS/TVET policy to cover all 139 public TVET schools, we advocate that the policy must not cater only for the fees of TVET students. The financing of TVET must be holistic, using existing industry baselines for costing. The current costing, which is based on Free SHS cost parameters, lacks context. The costing of free TVET in TVIs must include:
- Industrial protective gear.
- Insurance for instructors and learners against hazards at the workshop.
- Full, realistic cost of practicals specific to each program.

Furthermore, targeted efforts should be made to increase enrolment for girls, other vulnerable groups including out-of-school youth, and underserved communities in technical TVET courses to help enhance inclusiveness. Girls' participation should be rid of

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[7] United Nations Children's Fund and ITU. (2020). *Towards an equal future: Reimagining girls' education through STEM.* New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

stereotyping that encourages girls into TVET areas deemed female such as dressmaking, catering and hairdressing. A clear example is the case of the ILO's WOMENCANDOIT Scholarship for women which has successfully enhanced the inclusiveness of women in TVET related jobs. Finally, Government should embark on a program using avenues such as the media to boost the image of the TVET sector so that it is not seen as a route for low achievers. Such campaigns should showcase the ready employability of TVET graduates and the high returns to technical education. Financial incentives and tertiary education scholarships can be provided to young people who follow the TVET pathway.

6. Investing in collecting gender disaggregated data to provide evidence to inform policy making, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The issue of the lack of gender disaggregated data is because there is a lack of investment in the collection of data that reflects societal gendered roles. In Uganda, the government has adopted the National Priority Gender Equality Indicators for the development of comprehensive gender statistics.

7. Expanding digital infrastructure: The government should prioritize an education and learning system that focuses on digital skills that are needed to spur industry. This must be done for both students and teachers. ICT literacy should be a prerequisite for qualifying as a teacher and once qualified, teachers should undergo mandatory ICT training every 2-3 years. However, this cannot be done without teachers and students having access to working computers, stable electricity, well-equipped STEM laboratories, projectors, internet and TVET tools. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the labor market have shown the world the value of digital tools and the need for people to be competent users of technology.

8. *Strengthen teacher training curricula*: Stronger frameworks are required for stakeholder involvement, especially that of the private sector, in teacher curriculum development. The private sector is well placed to advise and make inputs into teacher curriculum development design and review and also provide career guidance to students and educators if systems are put in place.

Key Area 2: Youth employment

Despite laudable efforts by the current and past governments, Ghana continues to struggle to absorb its burgeoning youth population into the labor market, thereby failing to benefit from the youth dividend. Several youth employment initiatives and agencies have been set up and revamped by successive governments in the effort to create jobs for the youth. Furthermore, the government's Planting for Food and Jobs program, buttressed by the 10-point industrialization program under the Ghana Beyond Aid Initiative all aim to spur inclusive economic growth and create decent jobs for the youth, particularly women and other vulnerable groups. Meanwhile, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government

developed the COVID Alleviation and Recovery Enterprise Support (CARES) program, designed to stabilize, revitalize, and transform Ghana's economy to create jobs and prosperity for Ghanaians.

Key challenges

Four key youth employment concerns are identified for the Compact.

a) *Misalignment of skills to labor market requirements.* The skills mismatch denotes a mismatch between the skills that are in demand in the job market and the skills that are supplied to the job market. Most employers seek graduates with practical skills accompanied by soft skills (such as communication, teamwork, creativity, and problem solving and non-cognitive skills)[8], which most products of secondary and tertiary schools lack. This is attributable to the weak interface between learning institutions and industry, resulting in ill-prepared job-market entrants. Any current engagement between learning institutions and industry is light-touch and often tokenistic, leaving employers dissatisfied with the level of engagement. This leads to the continued use of curricula, teaching methods and materials that are not fit for employment purposes.

Additionally, there is a widening digital skills gap, with graduates very often deficient in digital skills demanded by most modern jobs. The International Finance Corporation predicts that over 9 million jobs in Ghana will demand digital skills by 2030 (Wachira , 2019)[9].

b) *Weak school-to-work transition frameworks and career guidance.* School-leavers often face the challenge of having no job experience, while employers often require a basic level of work experience for entry-level jobs. This reflects the weak interface between learning institutions and industry. The National Service Scheme (NSS), despite holding immense promise, is currently severely limited and inefficient in providing the youth the school-to-work transition they desire. Furthermore, the career guidance offered in schools tends to be inadequate and unstructured when available. This is partly due to low industry involvement and weak frameworks for structured career guidance in schools. Students continue to rely on parents for career guidance yet what parents can offer (although well-intentioned) is limited to their own individual experiences and often fails to prepare young people for future jobs. Such guidance is also riddled with gender stereotyping. For instance, girls are often discouraged from pursuing technical courses deemed for men, such as engineering and agricultural sciences.

c) *Weak labor market information systems.* Systems to track and forecast labor supply and demand trends are inadequate and outdated, hampering efficient functioning of the

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[8] ACET (2021). Strengthening Education and Learning Systems to deliver 4IR-ready workforce

[9] Wachira, K. (2019, May 16). *Digital skills demand – A big opportunity for universities*. Retrieved from University World News: https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190515083919195

labor market. There have been efforts for more than a decade to set up a comprehensive labor market information system, but implementation challenges continue to delay a full rollout of the system. In addition, there is an excessive supply of graduates in some subjects. For instance, it is clear that there is currently greater supply of social science graduates than demand for such graduates. A functioning labor market information system would help identify, early on, sectors and sub-sectors with excess supply of skills relative to those with a shortage, providing feedback for education and training policies for incoming graduates.

d) *Neglect of Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).* There is a growing number of youths on the urban streets in particular who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Such vulnerable youth have ended up on the street for various reasons and are often eager to find work but cannot. Even when employed, they are often engaged in vulnerable and hazardous work in poor conditions.

e) *High youth concentration in Accra:* The youth flock to Accra in search of jobs and other opportunities, a phenomenon partly driven by the centralization of all key government agencies in the capital city.

Potential solutions

We recommend the following solutions to the above issues.

a) Fix the skills mismatch through structured, collaborative, institutionalized and well-resourced frameworks that bring together industry and all levels of the education and training systems, from primary to tertiary. In line with the recommendations from Palmer (2018)[10], we recommend that industry must be strongly represented in the operationalization (governance and coordination) of the delivery of teaching and learning in schools. Engagement must incorporate both formal and informal sector employers and stakeholders. It should also comprise curriculum redesign, career guidance, teacher-employer peer networks, student placement and internships. Furthermore, to bridge the digital skills gap, graduates should be encouraged to reskill and upskill themselves using open-source resources on the internet such as Coursera, edX and Udemy. The government should collaborate with private sector and non-profit providers to implement affordable short courses (3-12 months) geared towards teaching practical digital skills.

b) Complete and rollout the Labor Market Information System to provide timely forecasts on labor market trends and flag sectors with high labor demand and supply. Lessons can

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[10] Palmer, R. (2018). *Jobs and Skills Mismatch Informal Economy, October 2017.* http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_629018.pdf

be learned from the approach used by India. The LMIS should be accessible to bodies such as the Youth Employment Agency to provide much-needed information flow on areas of excess labor demand for early reaction in redeploying and reskilling young people. Reskilling measures should include apprenticeship, blended learning, online short-courses and mentorships.

c) Create job centers and hubs to centralize access to information on jobs. It will become a platform for connecting employers with jobseekers as well as connections to upskilling or reskilling opportunities, particularly for underserved youth and NEET youth. In partnership with the private sector, job centers should be both digitally and physically available in urban, rural and deprived areas to ensure access to all. Access to digital platforms can be made credit-free, enabling inclusivity. Examples are the SAYouth.mobi and mPowa initiatives recently launched in South Africa by President Ramaphosa. Both platforms bring together eight government departments and private sector actors to form a network that will support young people to find pathways into the economy[11]. The UK has around 150 job centers across the nation providing for face-to-face interaction between job seekers and employers, with work coaches at the forefront. Work coaches are responsible for supporting people, especially the youth, to get into work by offering job seekers access to local training, job opportunities and services related to their well-being (GOV.UK, 2022)[12].

d) A revamp of the National Service Scheme (NSS) to address school-to-work transition challenges by revisiting the mission and governance arrangements of the scheme and strengthening collaboration with the private sector. The scheme should focus on placing youths in jobs matched with their skill set or offering opportunities to deploy youths to sectors and geographical areas with excess demand in unspecialized and specialized labor. The private sector should be incentivized, as opposed to the current approach, which discourages private employers (especially small and medium enterprises) from participating as employers in the scheme. The scheme should also be expanded to incorporate secondary school graduates who are not yet transitioning to tertiary education. Aside from the NSS, emphasis should be placed on encouraging secondary and tertiary students to undertake internships and apprenticeships as part of their study requirements. Tax incentives could be provided to the private sector to encourage provision of such schemes.

e) Invest in the youth entrepreneurship and tech-preneurship ecosystem. The Ghanaian youth comes with an inherent spirit for entrepreneurship and is clearly tech-savvy, with

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[11] https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/headlines/1615751-president-ramaphosa-launches-digital-platforms-to-address-youth-unemployment
[12] GOV.UK. (2022, February 4). *150 new Jobcentres and Youth Hubs now open*. Retrieved from GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/150-new-jobcentres-and-youth-hubs-now-open

capabilities to lead our charge towards competing as a technology hub. The recent establishment of the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Plan and the Ghana Enterprises Agency (formally National Board for Small-Scale Industries) signifies strong appreciation for harnessing this spirit of entrepreneurship, but still leaves a lot to be desired, especially in terms of increasing access to technology and growing the digital economy. Tech-preneurship denotes entrepreneurship in the field of high technology. Building a tech-preneurship ecosystem has the potential for employment creation and economic transformation with spill-over effects for industries that are not directly tech-related. However, in Ghana, efforts in this space are currently mainly led by international actors. The government should step in, amplify, scale up and institutionalize such initiatives. It should promote an enabling environment to provide incentives and to lower barriers to investment for youth entrepreneurs. Lessons can be derived from Malaysia, which recently launched a drive to motivate Malaysian youth to participate in tech-preneurship in agriculture (Dardak et al., 2020)[13]. In 2013, an Agro-preneur Unit was set up by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry to drive the program. The program incorporates components of human capital development, public and private sector investments in research and development as well as availability of financial resources. The ministry established this program specifically for people under 40 years old. The aim was to encourage the youth to be involved and incorporate technology in agricultural activities such as livestock and crop farming, marketing, fisheries and special projects such as the agro-based industry.

f) Relocate key public institutions outside Accra. The location of all government ministries, agencies, and departments as well as all three arms of government – the executive, legislature, and judiciary – in Accra is problematic, especially for the youth. Decongesting Accra and relocating some of these institutions to other regions could help to create jobs as some businesses and private investors will follow these institutions. Doing so would also attract young people to those locations, which could help to harness their creativity as new opportunities, such as in technology and banking, emerge in these new locations. If possible, other institutions such as Parliament, the judiciary, and some ministries, departments and agencies should also be relocated to other regions. This will help to create new opportunities by attracting private investors and businesses and potentially harnessing the entrepreneurial skills of youth.

Key Area 3: Youth leadership and empowerment

Young Ghanaians have demonstrated a strong interest in contributing to the country's development, not just in the labor market but in society more broadly. Their ability to

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[13] Dardak, R., Nik, R., & Haimid, T. (2020). Youth and Agro technopreneurship ecosystem in Malaysia. *FFTC Agricultural Policy.*

mobilize and lead must be nurtured and harnessed. We must engage them in policy formulation and ensure that we are listening to them and involving them when identifying solutions to the challenges the country faces. We should ensure that we are actively mentoring future Ghanaian leaders in all spheres—business, politics, civil service, media, and civil society – and harness the skills and opportunities of young Ghanaians in the diaspora so they can contribute to national development. We should also use national volunteer programs to harness the enthusiasm of the youth to solve local challenges and direct their passion and entrepreneurial spirit towards tackling community and national challenges.

Key challenges

1. *Governance and leadership*. The early decades of Ghanaian politics were noted to be dominated by the youth, particularly leading grassroot movements. However, interestingly, even as the youthful age composition increases in more recent times, youth representation is near invisible in governance and political leadership processes and positions, with no concerted and structured effort to address this issue. Current efforts are ad hoc – such as the Ghana Student Parliamentarians initiative – and driven by the tertiary education institutions.   Meanwhile, the Ghanaian youth is increasingly averse to engaging in public and political discourse, for a number of reasons. The youth feel a disconnect with governance processes and feel inadequately prepared to participate. The youth do not feel their voices matter, even when they do participate. For instance, in a survey by Van Gyampo (2015)[14] involving 4,400 young people and all "young parliamentarians" in 2013, findings show that even though as many as 44 young people were given prominence in Ghana's Parliament after the 2012 elections, this increased number did not necessarily guarantee increased youth participation in decision making regarding national affairs. Rather, there was a sense of "exclusivity, tokenism and co-optation of the youth into decision-making structures of the state".

2. *Civic participation*. One of the essential components for the functioning of democracy as well as personal development is civic participation or engagement. Participation in civic duties enables the youth to actively address societal problems confronting their communities. However, young people are becoming invisible in civic processes, in part owing to the lack of knowledge of the nation's Constitution. The issue of civic knowledge is equally crucial. Low civic knowledge among the youth partly contributes to low civic participation (notably democratic and political participation) among the youth.

Potential solutions

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[14] Van Gyampo, R. E. (2015). Youth in Parliament and Youth Representation in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909613511941

1. Institute progressive policies to groom the next generation of leaders – both men and women, by providing incentives and platforms for mentorship and to engage the youth (both urban and rural) at all levels of governance – local and district assemblies, regional and national representation. Initiatives such as the Mandela Washington Fellowship by former President Barack Obama have become useful in this direction. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is a platform based in the US that has been active in identifying and grooming a new set of leaders for Africa. The platform selects young people aged 25-35 years for a six-week fellowship at academic institutions in the US. Another example of a youth leadership development program is the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellowship program in South Africa. The program identifies young leaders with high potential and offers a part-time fellowship over six months. The program has the objective of training the youth to play active roles in their "communities, countries and spheres of influence". There has always been an incessant call for African countries to form youth leadership development programs based on the African adage: "Until the lion learns to tell its own story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter". Thus, we recommend that civil society, governments and youth activists make concerted efforts in implementing similar programs that, most importantly, are non-partisan. Such programs must have at their heart the motive of training a new set of patriotic leaders.

2. Empowering young people to engage with civic processes. More emphasis should be placed on ensuring young people are equipped with the necessary knowledge to engage with civic processes – to fully understand their rights and responsibilities as a citizen. The National Youth Authority (NYA) has been playing an active role in promoting youth participation in civic activities. In line with helping promote youth engagement in civic activities, the NYA has adopted strategies including (i) local level advocacy; (ii) using broadcast media at regional level; and (iii) e-governance and youth parliament at the national level. Such interventions should be strengthened and well resourced.

   Further, we recommend intensifying civic education around the country with the aim of increasing youth awareness of political processes, civic rights and issues and encouraging greater participation in community services. Subjects such as citizenship education and social studies have been made compulsory to enhance civic education, however, these subjects have been mostly theoretical. These subjects should be taught more practically. Moreover, knowledge about the Constitution should not be taught to narrow groups (such as people with a law background) but must be incorporated in the curriculum right from the primary to the tertiary level and taught in practical ways for better understanding and application. The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) has indeed been playing in active role in steering civic education, especially at the district and national levels. The work of the NCCE should be strengthened. In line with the recommendations of (Abudu & Fuseini, 2014)[15] we should revive the use of civic education clubs. These clubs can serve as channels through which the NCCE staff visit schools and offer civic education to students.

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[15] Abudu, A. M., & Fuseini, M. N. (2014). Civic Awareness and Engagement in Ghana: the Curricular Implication. *European Scientific Journal*, 250-268.

Goals and targets

Long-term vision	Goal/objectives	Activities
Key Area 1: Education and skills		
A Free SHS scheme that is sustainable and inclusive	A Free SHS program that is decentralized and more inclusive, reaching those who need it the most	Build more well-resourced community senior secondary schools Ensure all schools are accessible for persons with special needs
	Incorporate innovative and complementary solutions such as distance learning in the delivery of teaching and learning particularly, for rural areas	Expand public investment in digital infrastructure, prioritizing underserved regions and rural communities with limited education infrastructure. Scale-up evidence-based remote learning/distance education interventions in collaboration with civil society and private sector
	Rethink the financing of Free SHS	Hold structured stakeholder consultations to rethink how we implement the policy in a more progressive manner Implement the policy in a more progressive manner where i) the policy benefits those who need it the most through a means-tested approach ii) Removal of free boarding fees for all, limiting it to only students who need it the most Identify and implement a more sustainable public financing structure for the Free SHS and TVET scheme
Improved quality and relevance of education and training for all	Develop responsive and dynamic curriculum that prepares young Ghanaians for current and future jobs	Foster greater cooperation between schools and the private sector to be able to better match the curriculum with the needs of industry

Long-term vision	Goal/objectives	Activities
	Adequately resourced education institutions with STEM laboratories, TVET labs and appropriate materials and supplies	Provide institutions with adequate STEM laboratories, TVET labs with sufficient and appropriate materials and supplies
	Structured career guidance integrated in all schools	Institutionalize the provision of career guidance in all schools, along with well-trained resource persons
Equal representation and equal access of girls to STEM and TVET	High participation of girls in STEM and TVET courses, particularly at the secondary and tertiary education levels	Provide scholarships for girls in STEM and TVET course pathways at the secondary and tertiary levels
	An enabling environment created for girls to thrive in STEM and TVET	Remove gender bias in STEM and TVET education through public campaigns addressing cultural stereotypes
		Career guidance should encourage girls to take up STEM and TVET pathways
Bolster and promote TVET	Holistic financing of TVET as part of the Free SHS program, using existing industry baselines for costing	Provide sufficient financing of TVET to fully cover all equipment and apparatus students require for their studies.
	Changed public perception of TVET as a second-best alternative to traditional secondary education	Undertake public campaigns to tackle negative perceptions of TVET, showcasing the positive and high returns to TVET education
	Improved inclusivity of TVET education	Targeted efforts should be made to increase enrolment for girls, other vulnerable groups including out-of-school youth, and underserved communities in TVET courses to enhance inclusiveness. Provision of tertiary education scholarships for vulnerable groups, undertaking TVET
Improved quality and availability of gender	Improved gender disaggregated data on the	Invest in collecting gender disaggregated data on the state of

Long-term vision	Goal/objectives	Activities
disaggregated data	state of young girls and women in education and employment	young girls and women in education and employment Ensure all relevant data collection instruments are disaggregated by gender
Improving digital infrastructure and digital education	Improved access to digital infrastructure and digital education in all schools	Improve access to stable electricity, well-equipped computer laboratories and internet connectivity in all schools. Digital approaches to teaching and learning should be mainstreamed in all schools
Strengthening teacher-training curricula to be more industry responsive	Teachers at all levels equipped with adequate digital education and skills Stronger frameworks for stakeholder involvement, especially the private sector, in teacher curriculum development	Provide well-resourced digital infrastructure for teacher-training institutions Teacher-training curricula should be developed in collaboration with private sector Include relevant industrial attachment/internships in teacher training to help teachers understand what skills are required in the world of work
Key Area 3: Youth employment		
Fix the skills mismatch between the demand and supply of skills in the labor market, with young people equipped with the skills in demand by the labor market	An established, structured, collaborative, institutionalized and well-resourced framework that brings together industry and education institutions at all levels of the education system Well-coordinated collaboration with private sector for provision of career guidance/clinics, teacher-employer peer networks and student placements and	Enhance participation of private sector in development of school curricula and delivery of teaching Collaborate with private sector and non-profit providers to implement affordable short courses (3-12 months) geared towards teaching practical, in-demand skills for youth not in employment, education or-training (NEET)

Long-term vision	Goal/objectives	Activities
	internships. Secondary and tertiary education students undertaking internships and apprenticeships as part of their study requirements	
A well-functioning labor market information system (LMIS)	Development and roll-out of Ghana's labor market information system, fully accessible to bodies such as the Youth Employment Agency to provide much-needed information flow	
Establish well-resourced and functioning job centers and hubs	Functioning job centers with a central, digital platform as well as physical locations to connect employers and jobseekers Free access to the digital platform, enabling inclusive access.	Create both physical and digital job centers and hubs to centralize access to information on jobs Prioritize rural, deprived and urban poor areas for the establishment of brick-and mortar job centers
A revamped National Service Scheme (NSS) serving as an efficient school-to-work transition scheme for secondary and tertiary graduates	A revamped and sustainable NSS with a focus on placing youth in relevant jobs matched to their skills set or offer an opportunity to deploy youth to sectors and geographical areas with excess demand	The NSS scheme should be expanded to incorporate secondary school graduates. Restructuring of the NSS to be more efficient and effectively pleasing youth in relevant jobs The scheme should incentivize the participation of the private sector as opposed to its current structure which essentially discourages private sector participation
Invest in the youth entrepreneurship and tech-preneurship ecosystem	Lowered barriers to investments for youth entrepreneurs Scaled-up and institutionalized initiatives that promote tech-preneurship such as start-up incubators, accelerators and	Scale up and institutionalize initiates involving incubators and start-up investment for youth entrepreneurs and tech-preneurs

Long-term vision	Goal/objectives	Activities
	investment in research and development	
Key Area 3: Youth leadership and empowerment		
Institute progressive policies to groom the next generation of leaders	Institutionalized national schemes providing leadership training for young people Mainstreamed youth participation in political and socio-economic dialogue and processes	Provide incentives and platforms for mentorship and to engage the youth (both urban and rural) at all levels of governance – local, district, regional and national assemblies
Young Ghanaians empowered to engage with civic processes	Ghanaian youth fully aware and fully engaged from community to national level in civic process	Intensification of civic education in the country Effective incorporation of civic education in school curricula at all levels Revamp of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE)

Principles for engagement and successful delivery

Key principles we need to adopt and adhere to as Ghanaians to facilitate success in realizing the vision and targets of the youth aspect of the Compact include:

1.   De-politicization of opportunities for young people.
2.   Engender the culture of social accountability in public institutions – the institutions must be conscious of the priorities of the youth and increase specific programming for the youth.
3.   The government must be considered as a partner in development and facilitator of an enabling environment and not as the solution to all problems.
4.   There must be clear direction and partnership between public and private entities to develop active mentorship schemes.
5.   Equal fiscal and other incentives for local and foreign investors for the purposes of sustainable job creation and growth of the economy.
6.   Transparency.
7.   Volunteerism.
8.   Invest time and resources and innovative methods to boost patriotism.

All citizens are expected to:
1.   Avoid the culture of patronage (rewarding people for political contributions for campaigns at the expense of competence).
2.   The government should avoid pork-barrel programs and projects and look to more sustainable programs for the youth.
3.   Indiscipline (at workplaces, school, political organizations and in everyday life).
4.   Reducing cost of political campaign and financing.

Key questions for consultation and public dialogue

Key questions for consultations and public dialogue will be adapted based on the principles of:
- Managing expectations of participants;
- Theme-centered questionnaires; and
- Tailoring of questions for specific target groups.

Questions for the consultations could include the following:

- Do you agree with these key areas highlighted above as a focus for the Youth Compact?
- What would you, as youth, demand from the government and policy makers on the issue of education and youth employment?
- Should the Free SHS policy be maintained?

- What funding mechanisms should the government consider to make the Free SHS policy more sustainable?
- What are the benefits of the many different government youth employment programs?
- Should the government consolidate these numerous and overlapping programs?
- What should be the criteria for assessing public opportunities?
- How can we get the youth more involved in civic and political processes at all levels?
- What type of leadership training should be given to young people to prepare them for future roles?
- How should the government support TVET graduates to make that pathway more attractive?
- Does Ghana need a version of Silicon Valley where ideas are incubated and developed into usable industry products in science and technology? If so, what form should it take?

Possible ways to engage effectively with key target groups in the youth area and with ordinary citizens for the consultation and public dialogue:

- Use of different consultation approaches for different target groups, including focus group discussions, interviews, workshops and learning events;
- Use of online questionnaires and social media polls;
- Ensuring we engage as diverse a group of youth stakeholders as possible. Example of groups that should be engaged include:
    1. Youth-led and youth-focused organizations;
    2. Youth networks;
    3. Youth experts;
    4. Community-based volunteer youth groups;
    5. Youth political groups at constituency, regional and national levels;
    6. Grassroots cooperatives;
    7. Student groups (e.g. National Union of Ghana Students);
    8. Professional teacher groups; and
    9. Gender-focused groups.