



Ghana Youth Barometer 2024

An Analytical Summary

Background

The Ghana Youth Barometer 2024 is a pivotal study focused on understanding the perceptions of Ghanaian youth (aged 15-35) regarding their education and future prospects. The report is part of the 'Youth on Board' project initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to amplify youth voices in shaping Ghana's education policies. The study seeks to address the gaps in the current education system, particularly how well it prepares young people for future employment and societal contributions. Key questions include youth perceptions of the education system, their involvement in decision-making, and the changes needed to align education with labour market demands.

Methodology

The Ghana Youth Barometer employed a concurrent mixed-method design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. This approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis by cross-validating the findings. Quantitative data were collected through a survey of 1,940 youth across Ghana, using a well-structured questionnaire. Qualitative data were gathered through 48 semi-structured interviews and four focus group discussions (FGDs) across various regions, ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests for quantitative data, while thematic and discourse analysis was applied to qualitative data. The study's methodology was youth-led, ensuring that young people were not only subjects but also active participants in the research process, from data collection to analysis.

Findings

Youth Perceptions of the Education System

A significant portion of the youth, 42.9%, perceived that the education system in Ghana is deteriorating, primarily due to an excessive focus on theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills. This sentiment was reflected in the dissatisfaction expressed by many respondents regarding the quality of education, particularly in rural areas. The youth highlighted disparities in education infrastructure and delivery between urban and rural areas, with urban youth having better access to quality education.

Barriers to Education

The study identified financial constraints, high education costs, and lack of family support as the primary barriers to accessing education. These issues were more pronounced in rural areas, where the infrastructure deficit further exacerbated the challenges. Despite these barriers, there was a strong sense of optimism among the youth, with many expecting improvements in access to education in the coming years.

Education and Future Preparedness

While 40.3% of the respondents agreed that the current education system prepares them for the future, the qualitative data suggested otherwise. The youth indicated that the system fails to equip them with essential soft and practical skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and entrepreneurship, which are crucial for the labour market. The study revealed a mismatch between the education provided and the demands of the job market, contributing to the high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment in Ghana.

Youth Involvement in Decision-Making

The study found a high level of awareness among the youth regarding their right to participate in decision-making processes concerning their education. However, despite this awareness, actual involvement was

limited, with many youths feeling that their voices were not adequately represented or taken seriously by policymakers. This disconnect was more pronounced in rural areas, where opportunities for youth engagement were significantly lower compared to urban centres.

Youth Aspirations and Employment

The youth expressed strong aspirations for higher education and professional careers, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. However, financial constraints and lack of social connections were significant barriers to realizing these aspirations. Many youths favoured self-employment, viewing it as a more viable path to financial independence compared to formal employment. The preference for self-employment was particularly strong among rural youth, who faced limited job opportunities in the formal sector.

Preparedness for the Future

Despite the challenges, the youth maintained a positive outlook on their future, with a significant proportion feeling prepared to face future challenges. However, they acknowledged the need for additional support, particularly in terms of financial assistance, skills training, and networking opportunities, to fully realize their potential.

Conclusion

The Ghana Youth Barometer 2024 highlights the critical gaps in Ghana's education system, particularly its failure to align with the needs of the labour market and adequately prepare the youth for future employment. While there is a strong desire among the youth for educational and professional advancement, the current system presents significant barriers, especially for those in rural areas. The findings underscore the need for urgent reforms to make education more practical and inclusive, ensuring that all youth, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed.

Recommendations

To the Government of Ghana:

1. Curriculum Reform: Make the education curriculum more practical, focusing on skills that align with labour market needs. This includes integrating soft skills training into the curriculum, starting from the secondary school level.
2. Addressing Education Costs: Implement measures to reduce the cost of education, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that financial constraints do not prevent youth from accessing quality education.
3. Public Investment: Increase public investment in basic education to address the infrastructure deficit in rural areas and promote equity in education access.
4. Youth Engagement: Create more avenues for youth participation in decision-making processes, particularly in education policy. This includes revamping youth parliaments and ensuring they have the resources and authority to influence policy decisions.

5. Support for Self-Employment: Provide support for youth entrepreneurship through targeted programs that offer financial assistance, mentorship, and skills training.

To Donors and Development Partners:

1. Youth Representation in Policy: Ensure that youth voices are represented in all policy decision-making processes, making this a requirement for funding government and civil society initiatives.
2. Capacity Building: Provide funding for the capacity building of youth parliaments, focusing on technical expertise, advocacy skills, and effective communication.

To Youth-Led Civil Society Organizations:

1. Networking Opportunities: Create platforms for youth to network with potential employers and stakeholders, helping them to build connections that can support their career aspirations.





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