

REPORT: 77th ANNUAL NEW YEAR SCHOOL AND CONFERENCE



6th EDITION OF THE YOUTH SCHOOL

Event: New Year School Conference - Youth School 1st Panel Session

Topic: Ghana Through the Lens of the Future Workforce: The Ghana They Want

Date: January 7, 2026

Venue: University of Ghana Smart Classroom

SESSION ONE: 1. THE GHANA WE WANT: YOUTH VISION

This session convened students from the University of Ghana and three major secondary schools Presbyterian Boys' Secondary School (Presec Legon), Accra Academy, and Accra High School to articulate their vision for Ghana's future. The dialogue focused on the role of the youth not merely as beneficiaries but as active stakeholders and "co-creators" of national prosperity. Key themes included the need for moral discipline, technological adaptation without addiction, and a shift towards skills-based education.

Summary of Panel Contributions:

The panelists unanimously called for a Ghana that is prosperous, economically stable, and inclusive.

Active Stakeholders: Students emphasized that the youth must be viewed as active stakeholders in nation-building, not just passive recipients of development.

Technologically Driven Economy: There was a strong call for a fully digitized economy where technology enhances efficiency across all sectors, particularly in agriculture and health.

Modernized Artisanship: The panel advocated for a shift in perception regarding vocational work, envisioning a future where mechanics, plumbers, and artisans are certified, professionalized, and digitally literate.

Continental Trade: The vision included Ghana becoming a commercial hub where local entrepreneurs trade seamlessly across Africa, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area to reduce reliance on foreign imports.

2. Skills for the Future Workforce

To achieve this vision, the students identified critical skills required for the "ideal professional":

Critical Thinking & Innovation: Future professionals (whether accountants, neurosurgeons, or lawyers) must possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills to navigate complex national challenges.

Soft Skills & Ethics: Beyond academic knowledge, there is a pressing need for communication skills, moral ethics, and integrity, particularly for those entering legal and medical fields.

Entrepreneurial & Financial Literacy: Students highlighted the necessity of financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills to create value and manage resources effectively.

3. Challenges & Barriers

The discussion candidly addressed hurdles preventing the youth from realizing this potential:

Financial Accessibility: A major barrier identified was the lack of access to funds for acquiring necessary skills and professional training.

Systemic Corruption/Nepotism: Students expressed frustration with a system where success often depends on "who you know" rather than merit, particularly in scholarship allocations and job placement.

Digital Addiction: A significant portion of the dialogue focused on the threat of social media addiction, with students admitting it drains financial resources and sleep, hindering productivity.

Key Consensus & Recommendations

The session concluded with actionable consensus points for students, educators, and policymakers:

Prioritize Skills Over Just Knowledge: The youth must embrace skills acquisition (TVET, digital literacy) alongside theoretical knowledge to ensure they have a "backup plan" and are versatile in the job market.

Digital Discipline: There is an urgent need for "delayed gratification" regarding social media use. Students are encouraged to use technology for learning and creating content rather than passive consumption.

Moral & Ethical Revival: A call for a return to "Christ-like values" and discipline, rejecting vices like drug abuse and vaping, was central to the "Ghana We Want".

Youth as Advocates: The youth must become voices for their peers, using platforms to spread positive influence and peer mentorship.

Session Summary: The session reinforced that the "most powerful technology to have ever existed" is the human being. Therefore, nurturing this human capital through discipline, skills training, and ethical grounding is the only path to the prosperous Ghana envisioned by the future workforce.

YOUTH SESSION 2: ESSENTIAL SKILL SETS FOR THE FUTURE

The second panel focused on the specific skill sets and support systems required to equip Ghana's youth for the future. The discussion moved beyond theoretical aspirations to practical necessities, highlighting the synergy between professional skills (soft skills) and technical competencies. Key takeaways included the critical need for digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and a shift from job-seeking to job-creating mindsets through entrepreneurship.

Summary of Panel Contributions

The panelists identified a triad of skills necessary for the modern workforce:

Digital & Technical Literacy: In an ever-changing global economy, digital skills are non-negotiable. This includes the ability to use technology for productivity, such as presenting digital CVs for networking opportunities, and advanced skills like coding and big data analysis.

Professional & Soft Skills: A major highlight was the importance of "professional skills," specifically social and emotional intelligence. Panelists argued that many youth miss opportunities not due to a lack of technical qualification, but a lack of integrity, leadership, and the ability to manage relationships.

Entrepreneurship & Innovation: The youth must develop skills to start and manage businesses. This shifts the focus from seeking "white-collar" jobs to creating "blue-collar" and creative industry jobs that employ others.

Language & Global Literacy: To compete globally and leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area, learning additional languages was identified as a key skill to break trade barriers.

1. Bridging the Gap: Industry & Academia

Students proposed practical ways to align education with industry needs:

Direct Industry Engagement: Schools should invite industry personnel to speak directly to students about required professional skills, bridging the gap between theoretical coursework and workplace reality.

Practical Internships: There was a call for students to spend time working in industries to build experience, communication skills, and an understanding of work culture before graduation.

Creative Hubs: Establishing spaces (like farms or hubs) where youth can share creative ideas directly with industries to foster innovation.

2. Support Systems & The Role of Youth

The conversation addressed the necessary support structures and personal responsibility:

Enabling Environment: Students called for government support in providing basic facilities (tables, chairs) and creating an environment where mentors can guide them.

Personal Discipline & Mindset: A recurring theme was self-regulation. Students were urged to practice "delayed gratification" and discipline, quoting that "the house of a slug makes nought, but the hand of the diligent makes rich".

Emotional Intelligence: A significant portion of the closing remarks focused on managing emotions (anger, hatred) to avoid career-ending mistakes, citing real-world examples of how a lack of emotional control can destroy a future.

Key Consensus & Recommendations

1. **Develop Blue-Collar & Creative Economies:** The youth shouldn't look down on artisanship or creative arts; these sectors are the future of business creation and employment in Ghana.

2. **Emotional Intelligence Training:** Schools must prioritize teaching emotional intelligence recognizing and managing emotions as it is as critical as academic success for career longevity.

3. **Action Over Talk:** The session concluded with a powerful charge from educators: "We talk too much, we do too little. The youth were challenged to move from attending workshops to taking tangible actions immediately.

4. **Spiritual & Moral Grounding:** Attendees were advised to connect with their spiritual values (prayer) to resist social vices like drug abuse and aimless social media use, which threaten their potential.

Session Summary: The panel reinforced that while external support is needed, the ultimate responsibility lies with the youth to build value in themselves. As noted by a panelist quoting Einstein, the goal is to "strive to be a man of value, not a man of status".