

Youth blog by Nicholas Addae Mensah

Nicholas Addae Mensah is a medical doctor and a delegate of the Young Diplomats Ghana, based in Accra. He participated in the stakeholder engagement session of the APD on youth employment interventions in Ghana on 9 September 2020.

Yesterday, I got in touch with a classmate who is an engineering graduate from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi. He complained bitterly about the difficulty in securing a job and shared his frustration and anger about this country. His story was sad and I began to appreciate the reality and practicality of the presentation by Prof. William Baah-Boateng (head of the Department of Economics at University of Ghana, Legon) during the African Policy Dialogue at La Villa Boutique, Accra.

It is troubling to know that it is more difficult for educated youth to secure employment in Ghana than uneducated youth. I advised him to focus on developing some soft skills and offer to volunteer for companies so he can learn and gain work experience, which is a requirement for decent employment.

My name is Nicholas Addae Mensah, a Medical Doctor by profession and a delegate of the Young Diplomats of Ghana. I have interest in health economics, policy and management, so the African Policy Dialogue was a perfect opportunity to learn and experience first-hand the formulation of policy and engagement of stakeholders in addressing youth unemployment in Ghana.

The meeting brought together government officials, civil society organizations, political parties, private sector, academia, youth organizations, NGOs and other groups to share their experiences and discuss the way forward for sustainable youth employment in Ghana. It was a learning experience and I made new connections.

The program was well organised and the breakout session was fantastic. I enjoyed the brainstorming of ideas on how best youth unemployment can be tackled. People freely expressed their views and were more than willing to share their personal stories, which made the discussion more practical and interactive. I had the opportunity to be part of the discussion on the role of the private sector in addressing youth unemployment in Ghana.

I believe the private sector must be willing to dedicate resources for skills development of youth in their communities as well as collaborate with training institutions to re-align their curriculum to meet the expectations and needs of labour markets while addressing problems in society. In doing so, youth will master skills in problem-solving, research and entrepreneurship.

Moving forward, efforts should be made to establish the labour market information system that can guide evidence-based solutions in tackling youth unemployment in Ghana. Also, youth should be involved in the governance and policy making process, since they are the future of this country and form about 35% of the total population.

As we continue to change the public misconception about Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), we must remember that our failure to address youth unemployment threatens the peace and security of our beloved country, Ghana.

For me, I will continue to partner with organizations and individuals interested in youth empowerment and soft skills development among the youths in refugee camps and prisons. It is sad that these group of young people are often neglected and forgotten by policy makers. In fact, I was impressed by the strict adherence of the COVID-19 safety protocols during the meeting.