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More youth employment programmes, less youth in work: A relook of youth employment initiatives in Ghana

Emmanuel Tetteh Jumpah^{1*}, Johnny Owusu-Arthur¹ and Richard Ampadu-Ameyaw¹

Abstract: It is argued that unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a threat to national security because unemployed young people are vulnerable to social vices since they are lusty and left to idle would be lured into many social vices, which are inimical to the progress of society. It is therefore essential to keep young people busy by engaging them in productive works. But the irony of Ghana's situation is that while the number of youth employment programmes is increasing, there is still a rising number of employed youth. In this paper, we present a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis of four selected public youth employment initiatives implemented in Ghana between 2000 and 2019. This study aims at identifying and understanding gaps in youth employment and workforce development initiatives in the country as a way of proposing how policies should be targeted to address current challenges and also plan for the future. It relied on information from extant literature, project documents, key informant interviews and stakeholder validation workshops. The SWOT analysis was



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The authors have been involved in the design, management and implementation of numerous livelihood research projects for national and international organisations. Their research interests cut across various disciplines such as development studies, technology adoption, impact assessment, microfinance, agricultural modelling, food security, circular economy and rural development. This current paper analyses a major development issue confronting Ghana, because the country continues to observe increasing youth employment programmes and economic growth, yet the number of young people without work keeps increasing.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

High youth unemployment is a national security threat, particularly in the global south. To avert this threat, the number of state-led interventions to create employment opportunities for young people has increased over the years. However, the number of young people without work in recent years is staggering. The ILO data shows that youth unemployment in the past decade has always doubled the national average, a cause for concern. Consequently, we identified and analysed the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs) of four major state-led youth employment initiatives in Ghana to inform policy. State-led youth employment initiatives offer a pathway to gainful employment by marginalised youth in the labour market, but the colossal number of young people without work requires increasing the number of youth involved in such interventions. In spite of the employment opportunities offered, current interventions suffer from funding, access to start-up capital, a high youth population, post-project training and effective monitoring and evaluation plan.

employed to examine the state of the initiatives, challenges and opportunities for improvement in order to provide sustainable youth employment opportunities for the large numbers of young people without work. The findings suggest that these initiatives are generally youth oriented and have the potential to create employment opportunities for youth. However, it was observed that factors including aid sustainability, scalability and innovativeness were not adequately considered in designing the initiatives. Adequate or regular funding, post-project training and skills needs information that should adequately be considered in the design of initiatives in order to obtain maximum benefits from the initiatives.

Subjects: Sociology & Social Policy; Development Studies; Development Policy; Rural Development; Development Theory; Economics and Development

Keywords: youth unemployment; sustainability; scalability; Ghana; SWOT; programme

1. Introduction

The number of state-led interventions to create employment opportunities for young people has increased over the years, yet the number of young people without work in recent years is staggering (Akufo-Addo, 2019). In fact, a World Bank-WB [2020] report on youth employment programmes reported that about 50% of Ghana's youth are unemployed and/ or underemployed (WB, 2020). So, it is worth asking the real Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs) of these interventions that make resolving youth unemployment still a national crisis. Consequently, we identified and analysed the SWOTs of four major state-led youth employment initiatives in Ghana to inform policy and future youth employment programme development and implementation.

Youth employment and underemployment are global and have become a major development agenda for countries. This is because of the negative effects it has on young people and its adverse impact on the economic performance of countries (Dadzie et al., 2020; Kluve et al., 2019). Globally, it is estimated that about 621 million young people have no education, employment and training. These and others make it difficult for these young people to earn a living, thereby increasing the burden on governments, especially in the developing regions of the world where over 90% of these people reside (ILO, 2013a). This is a common statement of fact. Statistics indicate that among young men and women, unemployment is much more pronounced among women than young men in almost all regions of the world. According to the World Bank, youth in Africa constitutes about 60% of the jobless on the continent, and youth unemployment is double or more than double those of adult unemployment (ILO, 2013a). Statistics show that in the coming decade, about 11 million youths will be entering the labour market in sub-Saharan Africa each year. The question, therefore, is whether youth employment and training programmes designed for young people will provide the necessary work opportunities and/or meet the labour market demands in the next decade.

The unemployment situation of the youth in Ghana is no different. For decades, the employment situation has remained almost the same. Given the country's growing youth population, in 2016, it was projected that 300,000 new jobs would need to be created each year to absorb the increasing numbers of unemployed young people (WB, 2016). Unfortunately, the situation has not changed and many young people walk in the streets of the cities with no job or in search of non-existent jobs. This issue of youth unemployment poses a serious challenge to Ghana. Although available jobs mainly require low skills, these do not provide only low earnings but are also mostly in the informal sector, where job security is not guaranteed. An additional challenge for Ghana is the need to create access to an adequate number of high-quality productive jobs that promise higher earnings for the youth.

Significantly, unemployment in Ghana is concentrated within the age brackets of 15 and 35. This age group accounted for about 72% of the unemployed in 2010. Although this has improved, the rate of youth unemployment in the country is still high, with the current estimate at 9.49% for 2020 (ILO, 2022). The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relation (MELR) in 2014 estimated that about 210,000 unemployable, unskilled and semi-skilled young Ghanaians (including about 60% of graduates at various education levels and those who exit early) were turned into the labour market annually (MELR, 2014). However, the country's employment structure has hardly changed.

According to Guy Ryder (ILO Director-General), in order for countries to avoid violence and conflicts sparked by the youth, countries would have to prioritise investment in youth employment opportunities (Ajufo, 2013). This is extremely important as the rapid upsurge in the population growth of the youth viz-a-viz the slow rate of employment creation could pose a threat to the world's security. According to the UNICEF, ignoring the skills needs of disadvantaged young people will not only limit their chances of achieving their potential but also threaten slow growth and poverty reduction (UNESCO, 2012). In response, governments and international bodies including the World Bank have resolved to support youth employment initiatives as a mechanism to provide skills development and employment opportunities for young people. In Ghana, such youth employment programmes or interventions became more active from the year 2006; the state established the National Youth Employment Programmes (NYEP; Dadzie et al., 2020).

In addition to the NYEP, subsequent governments implemented similar interventions, such as Youth Enterprise Support (now National Youth and Entrepreneurial Programme), Nation

Builders Corp, among others. All these interventions are aimed at addressing youth unemployment in Ghana. It was observed that most of the youth who were unemployed found themselves in that situation because they lacked the necessary education or skills training to take up the available work opportunities (or to be self-employed). The programmes were initiated to get young people to become employment-ready, secure employment, and or stay in employment. After a decade and half, implementation of these interventions, about 47% of the youth are without work (WB, 2016).

The purpose of the study was to review current government programmes for promoting youth employment in order to identify pragmatic measures that will help to absorb a greater number of young people into the labour market and allow them to engage in more sustainable income-generating activities than is currently the case. This study employs the SWOT analysis technique to determine factors that support scalability and sustainability of youth employment interventions in Ghana. The study specifically explores how the strength identified can be used to minimise the weaknesses and opportunities used to reduce threats to the selected programmes. The study findings are intended to support policy-making and planning with information on the essential components of workforce development and entrepreneurship support needed for effective, sustainable and scalable youth employment programmes in Ghana.

2. State of youth employment programmes in Ghana

After many years of implementation and reviews of National Youth Employment Programme (now Youth Employment Agency), studies on the outcomes have produced mixed results. For example, Dadzie et al. (2020) found that income of young people who have participated in the interventions and/or have access to state employment opportunities have improved income and living standard. Besides, they observed that as much as there are challenges confronting the implementation of youth employment interventions, most of the initiatives have created better employment opportunities and improved household welfare. In spite of these positive effects on youth employment, Baah-Boateng (2013, 2019) identified some challenges to youth employment. These, according to the author, have limited the programmes from attaining the desired outcomes. These challenges include illiteracy or low level of education among the youth, mismatch of education qualification

with job market demand, high youth–population ratio, inadequate skills training opportunities, low and inconsistent wage payments, and decision to get wealthy quickly.

Additionally, rural–urban migration (mainly as a result of lack of investment in commercial agriculture) tends to create distortion in labour demand and supply (Fox & Kaul, 2017). The poor implementation or impact of these programmes is evidenced by the many young rural people who still migrate to urban centres in search of employment opportunities, which, because of the absence of such employment opportunities, have led to surplus labour in the cities. The consequence is young people taking up underpaid jobs. Furthermore, there appears to be insufficient and/or lack of co-ordination among different ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) implementing youth employment programmes in Ghana (Dadzie et al., 2020). The study identified a lack of long-term investment (training and retraining). For example, young people are trained but are not supported with seed capital to start the trade in which the skills were acquired.

2.1. Overview of the four selected interventions

Over the years, the Government of Ghana (GoG) and private sector actors have introduced many policy interventions to address the country's high youth unemployment. An inventory carried out by the World Bank in 2016 listed 40 main youth employment programmes, including 18 led by the public sector and 22 by the private sector. However, these programmes appear to have had little impact because youth unemployment persists, and it will be more challenging in Ghana as the number of new labour market entrants increases and outweighs job creation and also as technology changes the nature of the work opportunities available for young people. Over the years, Ghana has implemented many youth employment interventions through successive governments, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations. This section provides an overview of Ghana's existing youth employment programmes and their shortcomings and the inherent opportunities for decent employment and job creation. Specifically, the section examines four youth employment programmes that have existed and/or existed over the past two decades.

2.1.1. Programme I: Youth employment agency (YEA)

Youth Employment Agency (YEA) is one essential agency established in Ghana to empower young people to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic and sustainable development of the nation. This agency was established under the Youth Employment Act 2015 (Act 887). One of the key objectives of YEA is to provide support for the youth between the ages of 15 and 35 (Ghana's definition of youth) through skills training and internship modules to transit from a situation of unemployment to that of employment. However, its origin can be traced to 2005/06 when the National Youth Employment Programme was launched. The mandate of YEA is to train and provide the youth with requisite skills and to facilitate and monitor youth employment in Ghana. Besides, YEA is mandated to develop, support and provide training services to the youth. YEA envisions to become an outstanding public sector agency with the capacity to facilitate and create sustainable employment opportunities for the youth of Ghana. The programme provides an opportunity for the youth to learn a trade of their choice and be assisted for 2 years and exit thereafter. From time to time, modules are developed and implemented depending on the needs of a particular period. Some of the modules in YEA are Youth in Agriculture, Youth in Sanitation and Coastal Assistant, Youth in Trades and Vocations, Youth in Entrepreneurship, Youth in Apparel and Textiles, and Youth in Information Communication Technology. There are periodic reviews of the modules to ensure they meet the needs of a particular time and the financial resources available to run them. Funding for YEA has mainly emanated from the development partners, such as the World Bank and GoG. In his State of Nation Address (2019), the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, disclosed that a total of 107,115 youths were engaged in 2018 and 125,000 set to be engaged in 2019 under the various modules in YEA (Armah, 2018; Akufo-Addo, 2019). In addition, the Government facilitated the placement of 16,238 unemployed who registered with Public Employment Centres and Private Employment Agencies by the same year (Armah, 2018). These young persons were trained with vocational and technical skills, small-scale agribusiness enterprises, ICT, among others. The government envisaged an increase in these numbers for 2019 as the economy expands and new modules that meet the needs

of the time are being introduced. Funding for the programme is from GoG through taxes and levies (Armah, 2018; GOG, 2018).

2.1.2. Programme II: National entrepreneurship and innovation programme (NEIP)

The National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP) established in 2017 is a government initiative with the primary objective of providing an integrated national support for start-ups and small businesses. NEIP can trace its origin from the Youth Enterprise Support, which was established in 2016 with an initial seed capital of GH¢10,000,000.00. The programme, as it has been reviewed and restructured, basically focuses on providing business development services; start-up incubators and funding for young businesses to enable them to grow and become successful. NEIP was set up to support Ghana's vision of achieving middle-income status and building an industry-driven economy capable of providing decent jobs that are suitable and sustainable for development. NEIP aims at establishing an enabling environment for the creation of new businesses and to give these businesses the needed support to grow by means of financing and providing business development services and others. The programme supports entrepreneurs in Ghana with GH¢10,000.00 to GH¢100,000.00. Unlike capital market loans, the interest rate charged to beneficiaries is as low as 10% and repayment is between 2 and 4 years. This is to prevent usage of business expansion funds in loan repayment. Beneficiaries are mostly entrepreneurs in the agribusiness sector.

In 2018, the programme supported 1,300 beneficiaries, who have established their businesses and currently employ additional youth. It is expected to extend support to 3,000 beneficiaries in 2019 (GOG, 2018). An allocation of GH¢47,000,000.00 has been made for the 2019 budget (Armah, 2018; GOG, 2018). The programme is currently running four key implementation modules to achieve its set of objectives. These include the Incubation and Acceleration Programme, Business Competition & Business Support Programme, Industrialisation Plan, and NEIP Fund.

NEIP has created about 92,000 jobs for entrepreneurs, especially young start-ups, within the period of its existence.

2.1.3. Programme III: Nation builders corp (NABCO) and national service (Youth Employment)

In the 2016 elections in Ghana, graduate unemployment featured prominently in the national campaign even to the extent that there was Unemployed Graduates Association. The change in political power in 2017 brought with it the need to find an emergency and/or urgent solution to the phenomena. This led to the creation of NABCO in 2018. The intention is to provide graduates with employment in the civil and public service for 3 years with the possibility of permanent employment. One of the arguments for graduate unemployment was the lack of work experience by products from the tertiary institutions. The objective is that by providing temporary work for graduates, work experience will be gained which can help beneficiaries to gain full employment in other organisations later. Since the inception of the programme, it is estimated that more than 100,000 graduate youth from the fields of agriculture, education, ICT, health, community development, among others, have been absorbed by the programme. An amount of about GH¢850,000,000 has been allocated to the programme (Armah, 2018; GOG, 2018). NABCO presents an opportunity for graduates to acquire the necessary practical work experience to be able to fit into the labour market. That is, it aims at building a workforce out of a teeming youth population.

2.1.4. Programme IV: Youth in agriculture programme (YIAP)

The Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP) is the Government of Ghana Agricultural Sector initiative programme. The primary objective of the programme is to motivate the youth to accept and to appreciate farming as a commercial venture and to take up farming as a lifetime vocation. The four main basic components of YIAP are Crops/Block Farm, Livestock and Poultry, Fisheries/Aquaculture and Agribusiness. The YIAP programme has been designed to undertake the following services:

- Tractor services—where your land can be ploughed (If your land cannot be ploughed you have to clear it yourself);
- Supply of inputs such as seeds, agro-chemicals, sacks, and how to facilitate the marketing of your produce;
- Technical support from agricultural extension agents of Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA); and
- Training of farmers free of charge, where the need arises.

This programme was designed to attract the youth into agribusiness since most people working in the sector are the aged. According to MOFA (n.d.), the average age of a Ghanaian farmer is about 55, which does not speak well of a country, which seeks to sustain food production to meet the nutritional needs of its fast-growing population. As a result, YIAP is programmed to motivate the youth and equip them to take up agricultural production as a commercial and profitable business to help curb the level of unemployment among the youth and also to meet the right quantity and quality of food production in Ghana. Consequently, the programme will aid in generating appreciable income for rural folks. As part of the measures put in place to achieve its objectives, the programme is to provide youth with the material and technical support needed for agricultural production. As a result, the youth are assisted to acquire blocked farms, provided with a subsidised input such as fertilizers, seeds, extension and marketing services. Gyampo (2012) showed that the programme has provided thousands of jobs for the youth directly and indirectly despite its challenges.

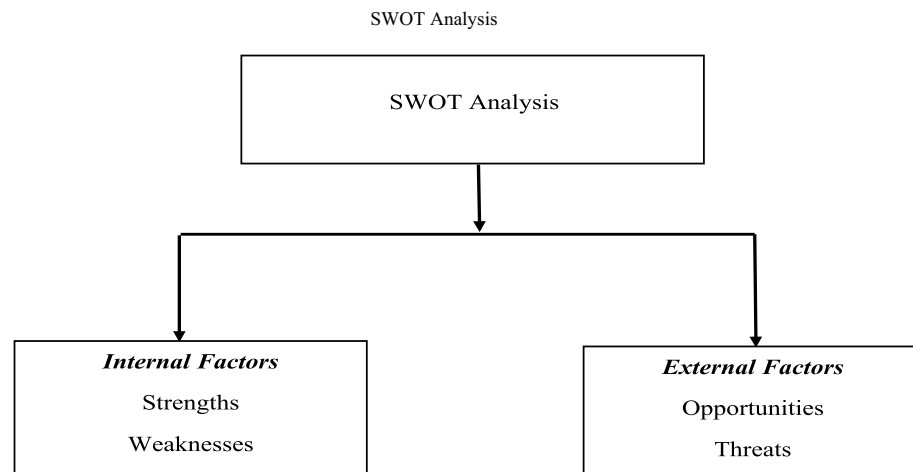
3. Methodology

This paper presents qualitative analyses of selected youth employment programmes in Ghana. The paper analysed the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T) related to the selected youth employment interventions in Ghana. The aim is to understand the workings of youth employment initiatives in Ghana and identify how the deficiencies can be resolved while improving on the current situations, as a basis for scaling up and ensuring sustainability.

The study began with a literature review to analyse what is known and unknown in order to identify existing gap in the literature. The literature review sought information related to the nature, design, implementation, and outcomes of youth employment programmes in Ghana from online databases, libraries, as well as policy and programme documents. There have been national development policies and youth employment programmes since Ghana's independence in 1957 (see, Jumpah et al., 2020). An example is the workers brigade in the 1960s. However, in this study, indicators were set for the selection of the youth employment programmes. Although youth unemployment has been in existence since independence, the problem gained national attention in the year 2000 leading to change of almost two decades of a political regime. It was at all-time high in 2000 at 16.25% (WB, 2021). So the paper set the year 2000 as the baseline. Secondly, because of the high numbers of unemployed youth, the study opted to analyse programmes that have created **at least** 50,000 jobs. Thirdly, it is impossible for the state to provide “work-for-pay” for all unemployed youths on public sector wage bills, so the study analysed programmes that have opportunities within for self-employment job creation. In this study, we interview not the beneficiaries of the programmes—an opportunity for future research.

Based on these indicators, YEA, NEIP, YIAP and NABCO were selected for the study. After literature review and selection of programmes based on the indicators, unstructured questionnaires were designed to interview key informants and other relevant stakeholders. The key informants are from agencies and organisations that are involved in youth development and employment programmes. A qualitative and key informant approach was used because the study wanted to explore the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the programmes from the perceptive of policymakers, since they designed and/or implemented the programmes.

Figure 1. SWOT analysis. Source: Adapted from Gürel and Tat (2017)



Data were obtained from 30 agencies and organisations such as National Youth Authority (NYA), YEA, NEIP, YIAP, MOFA, NABCO, National Board for Small-Scale Industries (NBSSI), Rural Enterprise Programme (REP), Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS), United Nations Youth Association-Ghana (UNYA-Ghana), Institute of IT Professionals (IITP), National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), Youth Advocates Ghana and other recognised youth associations in Ghana. Representatives of these organisations at the senior levels were assigned to respond to the interviews. These organisations were purposively selected because they are the main institutions and organisations involved in youth development/employment and related programmes in Ghana, and are have relevant information, experience and expertise in youth employment issues. The data obtained were analysed under the following themes: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) and the results are summarised in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4. Like any research, the SWOT analysis technique method may have its weakness. However, as noted by Thompson et al. (2007, p. 97), it is a “... simple but powerful tool for sizing up an organization’s [youth employment programme’s] resource capabilities and deficiencies, its market

Table 1. Strength in programmes

Programme I	Programme II	Programme III	Programme IV
(1) Youth employment	(1) Youth willing to work	(1) Focuses on graduate employment	(1) Availability of youth for work
(2) Learner chose trade or skills of interest	(2) Low interest rates	(2) An array of programme modules to select from	(2) No fee required for the training
(3) Fair employment opportunities	(3) Focuses on entrepreneurship skills	(3) No formal fees required	(3) Fair employment opportunity
(4) No formal fees required to be engaged	(4) Start-up capital	(4) Fair employment opportunities	(4) Possibility of acquiring technical knowledge
(5) Co-ordinate training provided	(5) Flexible repayment plans	(5) Possibility of permanent employment in civil service	(5) Possibility of owning a business
(6) Wide programme modules to choose from	(6) Fair employment opportunities	(6) Work experience	(6) Hands on practical knowledge
(7) Gender and persons with disability oriented	(7) Opportunity of owning a business	(7) Improve public services	(7) Focuses on literates and illiterates
(8) Focuses on both literates and illiterates	(8) Good possibility of starting own trade		
	(9) Follow-ups on the trainee’s progress		

Source: Summary from field survey, 2020.

opportunities, and the external threats to its future,” for which reason we employed it in the study (see also, Sarbah & Otu-Nyarko, 2014). A flow chart of the SWOT analysis technique is shown in figure 1. Using this approach enables the study to identify strengths and weaknesses that are internal, and opportunities and threats, which are external to the programmes for review and future youth employment programme planning and development. Also, the results were thematically analysed to draw meanings, inferences and patterns that come across the various selected programmes.

After the data were obtained and analysed, there was a validation workshop in which all key informants and other stakeholders who were involved in the interview were invited to affirm the findings. This was done to ensure that the summaries, meanings and inferences drawn from the various interviews are not misconstrued and that conclusions drawn are a fair representation of the data provided by the interviewees. Suggestions offered and questions raised were factored into the paper. The results and analyses are in the subsequent section.

3.1. Research ethical clearance

All individuals and institutions involved in the study were officially written to and consented to before the interview took place. There were official communications through emails and letters from the CSIR-STEPRI to the various institutions that were interviewed for this study. Dates to interview respondents were changed on different occasions at the convenience of the respondents because of their work schedules. Most of the institutions officially assigned representatives to respond to the interview. Due to rescheduling of dates and time, it took about a month to obtain the information from the various institutions involved in the study. Respondents were assured of the protection of their identities, the main reason for the non-attachment of specific names to quotes in this research paper.

3.2. Limitations

The study is qualitative, relying on data from development practitioners, policymakers and/or programmes’ implementers. The paper is therefore discussed devoid of quantitative data. A further study using quantitative data, particularly from programmes’ beneficiaries to validate the findings from the policymakers’ perspective may be needed. Because of the politically sensitive nature of the topic under discussion, the study is measured in the interpretation of respondents’ responses to questions during the interview periods. Despite this, care is taken to fairly represent the thoughts of respondents without exposing their identity. Also, due to the highly political nature of the interventions in this study, respondents were cautious in their responses despite following all ethical clearance protocols. This notwithstanding, both on- and off-the-record responses and discussions were appropriately worded so that respondents are not exposed to their appointing political authorities, but not compromising on the intention of respondents’ information.

4. Results and discussion

In this section, we present the results and analyses of the SWOT of the four selected youth employment programmes and identify challenges that, when resolved, can help improve employment opportunities for young people.

The literature suggests that several factors come into play to produce a successful workforce and skill development programme. One of the such important factor is the nature of the interventions considered. This looks at the policies, regulations and institutional structures put in place to govern the activities or programmes. These include employment services where people are referred or connected to jobs and employment outfits. Other factors and conditions required include workforce training, which covers apprenticeship, classroom education, and on-the-job training. The entrepreneurship and enterprise development aspect of such interventions involves training and provision of other support services to the youth to enable them to start their own businesses or get into self-employment. Another crucial factor for workforce development

programmes for the youth is the outcome of this particular initiative. This could be the immediate, intermediary or final results emanating from the programme design and implementation. This has often sought to promote diverse goals, but typical among these goals are increased knowledgeability, enhanced employability and increased access to employment as well as reduced vulnerability to social vices (Osidiye, 2017). In addition, other programmes have sought to develop in the youth positive attitudes, behaviours, and interests in continued education (formal and informal).

Von Braun and Kofol (2017) observed that critical to the success of such youth employment programmes is the identification of the key constraints and opportunities that could limit the success of the programmes. Various types of such constraints elicited from the literature include a situation where skills provided to the youth usually do not match the interest of the youth. This could be as a result of the nature of delivery mechanism, quality of education provided limited institutional capacity, or even lack of relevance of curriculum that meets the demand of the market. Another is a weak enabling policy environment where the economic, political, and social systems do not provide enough incentives to encourage workforce development and employment through such government initiatives. This is in addition to the limited access to education and/or employment of disadvantaged and vulnerable youth, especially young women who face several challenges, which could be cultural, social and even economic or political (WB, 2016).

For these selected programmes to thrive and be successful, there is a need to create a suitable and conducive policy environment on the demand side of the market. This will enable the intervention to sell and make good profits. These policies are usually broad-based, covering both the micro and macro environment to ensure that programmes are managed appropriately. This should include the existence of a workable national youth employment policy, national employment policy, and value-chain development.

A large volume of information was obtained from the interviewees for the study but it was not possible to present it all because of word count requirement of the journal. Therefore, in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, we summarised some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the four programmes as observed from the interviews with the key informants and other stakeholders. Some comments in support of the SWOT analysis of the programmes, as provided by the key informants, are accordingly reported.

Table 2. Weaknesses of programmes

Programme I	Programme II	Programme III	Programme IV
1.Demand for white collar jobs	1.Demand for white collar jobs	(1) Demand for white collar jobs	1.Demand for white collar jobs
2.Lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems	2.No purposive discrimination to help rural area	2.Favouritism in allocation to modules	2.Improper co-
3.Demand for higher wages	3.Dislike for agribusiness	3.No attention paid to entrepreneurial skills	2. Improper co-ordination with allied institutions
4.Short training time to master some crafts/trades	4.Inadequate business advisory service	4.Inadequate funding	3.Insufficient exit strategies for beneficiaries
5.Lack of guidance and counselling	5.Insufficient attention to entrepreneurial skills	5.Lack of effective monitoring and evaluation	4.Lack of follow-ups and post-project training after exit
(1) Insufficient soft and entrepreneurial skills		6.Inadequate motivated staff	(1) Dislike for agricultural programmes
(2) Lack of start-up capital		Temporary employment	(2) Inadequate funding
(3) Inadequate funding		(2) Focuses only on tertiary graduates	

Source: Summary from field survey, 2020

Table 3. Opportunities of programme

Programme I	Programme II	Programme III	Programme IV
1.Patriotism -public demand for made-in-Ghana goods 2.Donor support 3.Increasing youth population	1.Patriotism -public demand for made-in-Ghana goods 1.The government's continued support 2.Business	1.Possibility of permanent employment 2.Experience for employment in other sectors 3.National and	1.Patriotism—public demand for produced-in- Ghana goods 2.Foreign exchange from export of surplus food
4.Renewed interest in youth employment initiatives by government and development partners 5.Link with international bodies 6.Permanent employment with civil service or private sector 7.Renewed interest in self-employment	expansions leading to multiple employment 3.External stakeholders monitoring	international connections and career building 4.Renewed interest in volunteerism	3.Renewed interest by government and DP to support agriculture 4.Financing from the private sector to support the government. 5.External stakeholder's monitoring and evaluation

Source: Summary from field survey, 2020.

“Providing work-for-pay, especially on the public sector wage bill is unsustainable. That is why under the NEIP, the government has decided to provide entrepreneurial skills training and support them [the youth] with funds to start their own businesses. In that way, they [the youth] can also provide employment opportunities for others ... However, most of these programmes are donor-funded, so when the donor funds dry up [finish], then the programme is likely to come to an end. However, the government is making an effort to pass a legislation for the NEIP, so that government can have statutory funds to pay for the cost of some of these programmes. Also, the share number of young people who are unemployed makes it extremely difficult for the programme to cater for the needs of all those who apply for support.”—A programme officer, NEIP

Table 4. Threats of programme

Programme I	Programme II	Programme III	Programme IV
(1) Unreliable internal and external funding (2) High wage demand by employees (3) Increasing youth population (4) Increased prices of services supplied by third party (5) Improper monitoring and evaluation (6) Political interference (7) Favouritism in placements	(1) Unreliable internal and external funding (2) High level of loan default among beneficiaries (3) Poor demand for made-in-Ghana products and services (4) The absence of regulations and protections for youth engaged by the programme (5) Inadequate funding (6) Favouritism	(1) Unreliable internal and external funding (2) Political interference (3) Nepotism and favouritism in the placements in modules (4) Increased demand for wages (5) Lack of means of self-employment after exit from programme (6) Delay in salary payment	(1) Unreliable internal and external funding (2) Political interference (3) Negative attitude towards agribusiness (4) Nepotism and favouritism in the allocation of inputs (5) Economy moving from agro-based to service-based industry (6) Lack of means to start an own trade/business (7) Inadequate funding

Source: Summary from field survey, 2020.

“The YEA, since its inception, has provided thousands of jobs for the youth of this country. The modules we [YEA] run are not static, they [programmes] change from one time to another depending on the request from our partnering institutions, which are mostly the MDAs [ministries, departments and agencies]. Currently, we [YEA] are only running the Youth in Education project. One of our [YEA] major problems is the irregular payment of the allowances to beneficiaries, which normally is the result of lack of funds. Also, the numbers of unemployed youth are so much that there is a lot of pressure on the agency to recruit. But inadequate funds inhibit our ability to do so. Another challenge is that we [YEA] provide employment for the youth for 3 years and thereafter the person is left to exit without any strategy. Such a person will likely become unemployed again, and this does not auger well for all of us as a country. We [the country] should be able to provide sustainable employment opportunities for our citizens.” – A programme officer, YEA.

“The Youth in Agriculture Programme [YIAP] was initiated because Ghana has vast uncultivated arable lands and there are so many young people without jobs but the government cannot employ everybody, so it decided to provide support to the youth that are willing to venture into agriculture The YIAP has opened many job opportunities for young people in this country [Ghana]. Others [youth] have graduated from the programme to become commercial farmers and can now provide employment opportunities for other young people. Others [youth] have also left for other ventures because of low prices of agricultural commodities, especially in times of glut. Others [youth] also left because of the ‘want to be rich quickly’ attitude of the youth which agriculture rarely provides.”—A Programme Coordinator, YIAP.

4.1. Identification of key strategic issues

The SWOT analysis revealed that no formal fees were required to enable any programme participants to enroll in any of the programmes under study (Table 1). Payment of participation fees, as it can be found in some youth development programmes, could be a barrier to access to the programme by young people, who are already unemployed, and have no source of income. Non-payment of participation fees may increase participation and/or employment creation. However, non-payment of participation could have a negative effect on the administration of the programmes as the organisations may incur cost in the running of the organisation or programme. But as is the case, the government takes the responsibility of paying for the administrative cost of the programmes so that the youth are not burdened with participation fees. With the exception of Programme (III), which was solely designed to absorb and curb the level of graduate unemployment in Ghana, all the selected initiatives under study were largely non-restrictive by education (tertiary education in particular). These were programmes specifically designed to provide workforce development training, employment and entrepreneurial skill opportunities to the youth in the communities.

Youth orientation should be an asset and the right step towards the development of Ghana’s future workforce. By building the capacities of these youths, they are empowered to contribute to a productive economy. The current situation calls for the provision of sufficient education, and effective training on relevant skills and jobs, then the growth in youth numbers could be highly beneficial to Ghana. This is especially the case with the belief that the youth have a comparative advantage in the labour market in terms of technology advancement and early adoption. They have a natural affinity for technology and their ability to apply and understand different technologies separates them from other generations in the workforce.

4.2. Funding and start-up capital

The case of unreliable internal and external funding (Table 4) and inadequate funding are major challenges that affect the sustainability of the government-initiated youth employment

programmes. As stated earlier, the youth did not have to pay fees (Table 1) to be enrolled in any of the programmes. This makes the programmes accessible to young people who have the interest. While this may be a motivating factor for youth, especially to the marginalised and the down-trodden from poor homes or poor resource backgrounds, the absence or lack of adequate funding

becomes a burden on the budget allocated for these programmes. This could be a source of disincentive and produce a negative impact on the expected outcome of the programmes. This could affect proper skills development, effective monitoring and evaluation systems and sufficient entrepreneurship skills development, especially after graduation from the programme (Table 3). Inadequate funding and unreliable funding sources may be the determining force that will not allow the acquisition of the necessary skills, tools, materials and equipment needed for practical experience. Proper skills development requires that the trainees have access and exposure to appropriate tools and equipment for practical experience of the acquired knowledge (also Tukundane et al., 2015). It is acknowledged that funding plays a critical role for sustainability and successful scaling up. This was evident in the context of scaling up some identified technologies in Ghana (Ampadu-Ameyaw et al., 2017).

4.3. Attitude towards agribusiness

The study revealed that the youth are mainly interested in white collar or office jobs (Table 2) and their attitude towards agribusiness (Table 2) is not encouraging, especially in programme IV (Table 2). This negative attitude towards agriculture retards development because agriculture and related rural trades have the greatest potential to provide the youth with an economic and social opportunity (also Losch, 2014; Tukundane et al., 2015).

The government must take a critical look at the programmes related to the agricultural sector to put significant measures in place to make agribusiness more attractive to the youth. This also will call for the integration of new methods and technological process in agribusiness programmes. In this regard, it is important to note that the dynamics of the labour market change with the inception of new technologies. Recent technological progress has significantly enhanced the capacity of computers, raised the autonomy, versatility and flexibility of mechanical systems (robots) and enhanced applications in industries and research and development. These applications are increasingly replacing normal manual routine tasks, even among skilled workers

(ILO/UN, 2021). Consequently, the government must adjust to the new changes in the labour market and begin training the youth in new skills in the agricultural sector to make agribusiness more attractive and lucrative for the youth to venture. This will only happen if the programmes initiated by the government are done with careful consultation with the labour market and employers.

4.4. Relevance to the labour market

The study revealed that almost all the programmes (Table 1) organise various kinds of capacity-building for their participants. Agribusiness, agriculture, ICT, advisory/consulting, artisans, beauty, banking and other financial skills, constructions, business management, processing, outsourcing, food processing, industry/manufacturing and media and communication, among others, are some of the areas of key skills training or capacity building. However, it could not be said that these skills are strongly linked to the labour market. The labour market is one of the most important areas of life. The active engagement in the labour market is the main source of income for most people. The ability for one to engage and sustain it is significant in competitiveness and employability as well as in the living standard of people.

This paper revealed that in all programmes, except for the Youth in Agriculture Programme (programme IV) which specifically trains the youth with appropriate agriculture skills, the training offered to the youth by the other programmes was mixed and some of them may necessarily be the needs of local communities. Meanwhile, the dynamics of the labour markets are changing with the onset of new technologies, especially information technology (use of mobile phones, computers). As a result, youth employment programmes must adjust to the new changes in the labour market and begin training in new skills rather than focusing on old modules. This could be made possible if policymakers and actors of youth employment programmes keep in touch with the labour market and employers.

4.5. Post-project training and monitoring

Effective monitoring and post-project training are factors that are critical to the sustainability of projects as well as possible scalability. However, analyses of the programmes implementation documents appear to suggest that these two factors (post-project training and monitoring) were not adequately considered particularly Programmes I, II and IV (see, Table 2). The absence of these factors was found to be major weaknesses in the government-initiated programmes for youth employment. This does not favour programme success.

The continuous assessment of the programmes in relation to the agreed implementation plans and goals could only be realised through effective monitoring, which helps to assess stakeholders' understanding of the programme, minimise the risk of project failure, promoting systematic and professional management and assessing progress in implementation. This helps to ensure sustainability of the programmes as the possible grounds for failure would be covered during an effective monitoring and evaluation activity. The absence of effective monitoring and evaluation negatively impacts the sustainability of the programme. Post-project training helps to ensure continuous capacity-building and facilitate effective usage of acquired skills in a more productive manner.

5. Conclusion and policy implication

This study investigated government-initiated youth employment programmes designed to build the country's workforce as well as inculcate into the youth entrepreneurial skills. It explored the constraints and opportunities such initiatives face in their implementation as a way of seeking to determine ways by which sustainability and scalability of the selected or similar initiatives in the country can be achieved using a SWOT analysis. In this paper, attempts have been made to examine four of these programmes to provide knowledge and critical factors on the possible means of achieving scale-up and sustainability. The results show that youth employment programmes by government can improve the access of marginalised youth to the labour market, hence the importance of such initiatives to ameliorate people's livelihoods by providing them with opportunities to earn income and other assets. In spite of this, the study revealed that most of the current programmes or initiatives are suffering from lapses, which do not help the youth to realise their full potential. These challenges include inadequate funding, lack of access to start-up capital, a high youth population, and post-project training and ineffective monitoring and evaluation plan.

It is suggested that government-initiated programmes to help the youth realise their full potential should endeavour to allocate sufficient funds to run the initiatives. Monitoring activities and post-project training programmes should be considered essential to the sustenance and scalability of such initiatives. Labour market research to determine the current or future labour market needs in labour shortages should be made to play a critical role in selecting areas needed for youth training. These training programmes should endeavour to deliberately involve training institutions and centres. Successive governments could set aside funds to provide start-up capital for the youth who graduate from such training programmes and would like to go into self-employment. Despite the contribution of this work to knowledge, the study is limited to the extent that it relied only on qualitative data from development practitioners, policymakers and/or programmes' implementers. A further study using quantitative data, particularly from programmes' beneficiaries to validate the findings from the policymakers' perspective may be needed.

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