

Communique Issued at the 69th Annual New Year School and Conference, Organized by the School of Continuing and Distance Education, College of Education, University of Ghana, from 15th – 18th January, 2018

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High unemployment rate hampers economic development and it is seen as a threat to national security. It is against this backdrop that, the School of Continuing and Distance Education, University of Ghana organized its 69th Annual New year School and Conference under the theme; “**Job Creation for Accelerated National Development: The role of the Private Sector**”.

Overview

The conference started on Monday 15th January 2018, with an opening ceremony which was chaired by the Chairman of the Governing Council of the University of Ghana while the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, presented the welcome address. The Vice- Chancellor stressed the need to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit among the youth to move them from social dependence to self-sufficiency. The Acting Provost of the College of Education urged policy makers to promote development oriented policies that support productive activities. The key note speaker, Sir Sam Jonah called for strong government support in creating the requisite environment for national capitalism so that Ghanaian entrepreneurs can deliver growth to support sustainable development. The school was formally opened by the Vice President of the Republic Ghana.

The theme for the New Year School and Conference was further divided into eight sub-themes as follows:

- Creating an enabling business environment for private sector development
- Developing and supporting innovative entrepreneurship
- Private sector participation in local governance for job creation
- Enhancing labor productivity through skills development for industry
- Attracting investment into the agricultural value chain: the role of the private sector
- Accelerated industrial development for job creation
- Innovative financial services for business and SMEs development
- E-business and job creation

At the end of the New Year School, a collaborative effort by Ministers of State, captains of industry, various union leaders and participants from all walks of life resulted in the following recommendations:

- As a way of ensuring Ghanaian products are competitive domestically and globally, it is recommended that, the government, through the Ghana Standards Authority and other regulatory agencies strictly enforce international standards through local associations for the production of goods and services. Government should use its purchasing power to ensure compliance.
- There should be a policy that will mandate all state agencies to purchase made in Ghana products.
- In ensuring that we attract private investments into the agricultural value chain, the government through the Ministries of Food and Agriculture, Health and Education should strengthen and make it compulsory the policy that requires government institutions to purchase produce from local farmers.
- Government should enforce the Land Use and Special Planning Act (Act 925) through Land Use and Spacial Planning Authority to ensure that all lands are properly planned before permitting development on them. This should include the protection of lands earmarked for industrial parks.
- The Bank of Ghana should outline a clear policy that will facilitate the reduction of the cost of doing business by ensuring that, interest rates charged by banks are not overly higher than the Bank of Ghana Monetary Policy Rate. There should be transparency in the determination of interest rates by commercial banks
- Government should intensify the campaign to change the negative mindset of Ghanaians towards local products in order to boost demand for locally produced products and reduce imports. The action plan should include specific steps by government to provide subsidies to local businesses to make their products competitive
- The government through the Special Development Initiatives should establish Agricultural Development Fund in the various authorities. This fund should be used to develop appropriate infrastructure to support cottage industries that will use local raw materials and employ the youth in their localities.
- In order to engender an entrepreneurial culture among the youth, there is the need for them to be exposed to international best practices. In particular the Ministry of Education should promote visits to industrial sites (both domestic and international), mentorship and entrepreneurship competitions in the educational curriculum, particularly at the basic level
- The government should expedite action on bringing all its skills training centers, such as NVTI and ICCES among others under the Ministry of Education as provided in the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Act (Act 718, 2006). A clear deadline by which COTVET can begin to regulate all government Skills Training Centers should be established and followed
- The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) and all such bodies should as a matter of urgency collaborate with and support tertiary institutions to train sector specific human resource for the country's emerging industry.
- There is an urgent need for the government and tertiary institutions to act to tackle the skills shortage by adopting a more proactive approach to developing the skills of the

future workforce and graduates in areas such as critical thinking and creativity, to give them an edge over machines and computers

- Productive partnership should be established between the government and the private sector to pursue the government's role as a facilitator more seriously and strategically. In particular, the Local Government Ministry should strengthen Public Private Partnership to create jobs at the local level.
- Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies should encourage the participation of professionals and local entrepreneurs in the crafting of development plans by coopting these individuals into the various sub committees of the assemblies.
- The Ministry of Trade and Industry should organize regional based technology fairs and exhibitions annually to attract local and foreign investors and encourage innovative projects or inventions from local entrepreneurs
- The government through the Ministry of Education and GETFUND should resource technical/vocational institutions in order to equip the youth with employable skills
- The Ministry of Communications should develop and expand specific ICT training modules for local and "emerging local entrepreneurs" in order to strengthen, empower and accelerate private sector participation in e-business