Rising youth unemployment in Ghana: What can agricultural education do to improve employability of new graduating students?

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Introduction
One of the major challenges facing young people in Ghana is unemployment. The situation applies to uneducated and educated groups alike. Currently unemployment rate of young people between 15 and 24 years of age is 15.9% with an estimated number of 1.2% new entrants to the labor market annually (Ghana Country Report on unemployment, 2002). These makes unemployment in the age group 15 – 24 years more than twice of that of 25 – 44 age groups and three times that of 45 – 60 age groups. Unemployment in Ghana has therefore been described as a youthful phenomenon (Ghana Country Report on unemployment, 2002). Within the Government, the Ministry of Youth and Sports coordinates the national youth policy of Ghana in cooperation with other youth serving ministries and youth organizations such as the National Youth Organizing Commission, Youth Development and Aged Welfare Foundation, Ghana Youth Business Trust and the Yes Country Networks. However, Youth employment policies in Ghana, does not directly connect youth education with their employment. Since about 70% of Ghana workforce is employed by the agricultural sector, it seems only reasonable that agricultural education in Ghana should be streamlined and empowered to adequately prepare the youth to take advantage of the many opportunities that exist or that can be created for agricultural occupations and professional careers.

Major points or information to be shared

- Agricultural education institutions in Ghana must incorporate career exploration programs (CEP) in their curriculum.
- Where the CEP are already in existence, strategic plans to improve program quality should be put in place
- The needs and career prospects of students at different schools and locations should be considered when developing the CEP
- CEP must put emphasis on professional agricultural careers to a larger extent. And it must clearly show the link between college preparation and leadership in agribusiness, environmental and scientific occupations.

Conclusions
Successful efforts at reform within the agricultural education system in Ghana will rely on strong leadership in programs at the national, regional, district and assembly levels. Major leadership challenges will include, program evaluation, teacher education, curriculum development, resource availability at top and bottom levels and favorable legislature and budgetary appropriations.

Educational importance
By incorporating career exploration programs in their curriculum, agricultural education institutions in Ghana will be trying to be comprehensive in their coverage, scientific in their method and practical in their impact and focus. Such a value-added education is what Ghana needs to reverse her rising youth unemployment.