

# Specifying an Innovative Route in Confronting Youth Unemployment in Ghana

*A Policy Brief for the Ministry of Trade,  
Government of Ghana*

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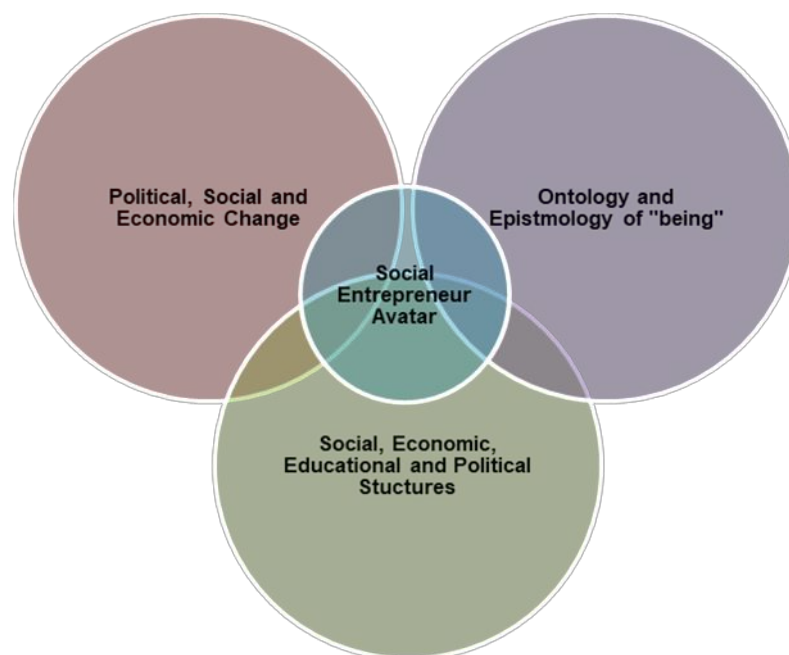
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## Executive Summary

- Unemployment among the youth in developing countries has become a cause for major economic concern, particularly in Sub-Saharan African countries.
- Environmental degradation and global warming are being experienced and reported.
- Addressing unemployment and environmental degradation demands a paradigm shift, hence the strategic importance of social enterprise.
- Social enterprise has become a growing concept in the global world. Institutions have championed the importance of social enterprise/social entrepreneurship within a public policy context locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.
- Social enterprise leads to job creation, improves government revenue through taxes, improves the capacity of local industries, and stimulates the economy's growth within the framework of a sustainable business model.
- Socioeconomic inequalities disproportionately impact the life chances of Ghanaian young people. In an era of COVID-19 associated global economic recession, a multilateral approach to address unemployment issues is needed to equip the labour force with appropriate employability skills.
- Employment growth in Ghana appears to have lagged behind its economic growth in recent years, and social entrepreneurship is one of the surest ways to solve the youth unemployment issue while at the same time addressing environmental challenges and championing the government's post-pandemic recovery.
- Social enterprise can have a positive impact on the economy, primarily as the Ghanaian government seeks to increase investment for entrepreneurship in the 2022 Budget statement on the theme 'Building a Sustainable Entrepreneurial Nation: Fiscal Consolidation and Job Creation'.
- Social entrepreneurship will be at the forefront of Ghana's quest to promote the building blocks for an inclusive and sustainable post COVID-19 and inflation recovery when there is a functioning and efficient legal framework for social enterprises.

## Introduction

- By teaming up with various stakeholders, designing programmes, and highlighting the socioeconomic problems, the authors regarded social enterprise as a means to create job opportunities, combat unemployment, equip the Ghanaian youth with employability skills, and improve the local economy in Ghana within the framework of a sustainable business model.
- Collaboration between higher education and local authorities, as well as encouraging young people to get involved in social enterprise, has been fundamental in this study ([Kyekye, 2022](#)). All in all, social enterprise and social entrepreneurship are perceived as vehicles for green employability and future green economic growth.
- To address these challenges, the higher education sector must rethink and re-evaluate programmes and teaching/coaching approaches. To conceptualise this approach, the authors of this research have introduced this model:



**Figure 1: The social entrepreneur: A practical conceptual framework.**

The initial ideas of this policy brief were presented at the following workshops:

- (2022) Enhancing public policy on sustainability: An entrepreneurship and innovation strategy, 18 November, Ghana Social Enterprise Forum (with Halsall, J. P. and Snowden, M.), British Council, Accra.

- (2022) Providing a new direction in tackling youth employment in Ghana, 28 September, Ghana Social Enterprise Policy Workshop (with Halsall, J. P. and Snowden, M.), Social Enterprise Ghana, Accra.
- (2022) Positioning social enterprise (SE) as the engine for green economy: Emerging public policy discourse, 18 November, Ghana Social Enterprise Forum (with Winful, E. C. and Quaye, J.), British Council, Accra.

This policy brief is based on number of outputs the authors have developed (see: [Opuni et al., 2022](#); [Quaye et al., 2021](#) and [2022](#); [Snowden et al., 2022a](#); [Snowden et al., 2022b](#); [Winful et al., 2022](#)).

## Methodology

The research that was undertaken applied an action research approach. The authors chose action research because they want to make a key contribution in tackling youth employment in Ghana in a sustainable way and consider a comparative perspective with the UK. Hence, the approach involves a three-step systematic process:

1. Action – a comprehensive literature review, a social survey, and focus group meetings were carried out. The participants explored the contribution social enterprise makes in local, regional, national, and global contexts, and examined the skillsets required for entrepreneurship and innovation. The participants were from different stakeholder groups (i.e. academics, students, the public and private sectors, and the third sector), all of whom work in or are interested in social enterprise.
2. Evaluation – undertaken after the data was collected and transcribed. Qualitative transcripts were analysed and specific themes were devised.
3. Critical Reflection – the final part of the process, whereby the authors constructively and critically reflected on the viewpoints that were shared in the focus group meetings.

## Results

- As can be seen in [Figure 2](#), the qualitative research element of the data collection strategy is comprised in to four key areas.
- Participants emphasised the need for a more strategic focus on technology within the context of Ghana.
- A new driver on gender equality is needed, especially for women. The Ghanaian government need to develop new entrepreneurship and innovation opportunities, for young women in particular.

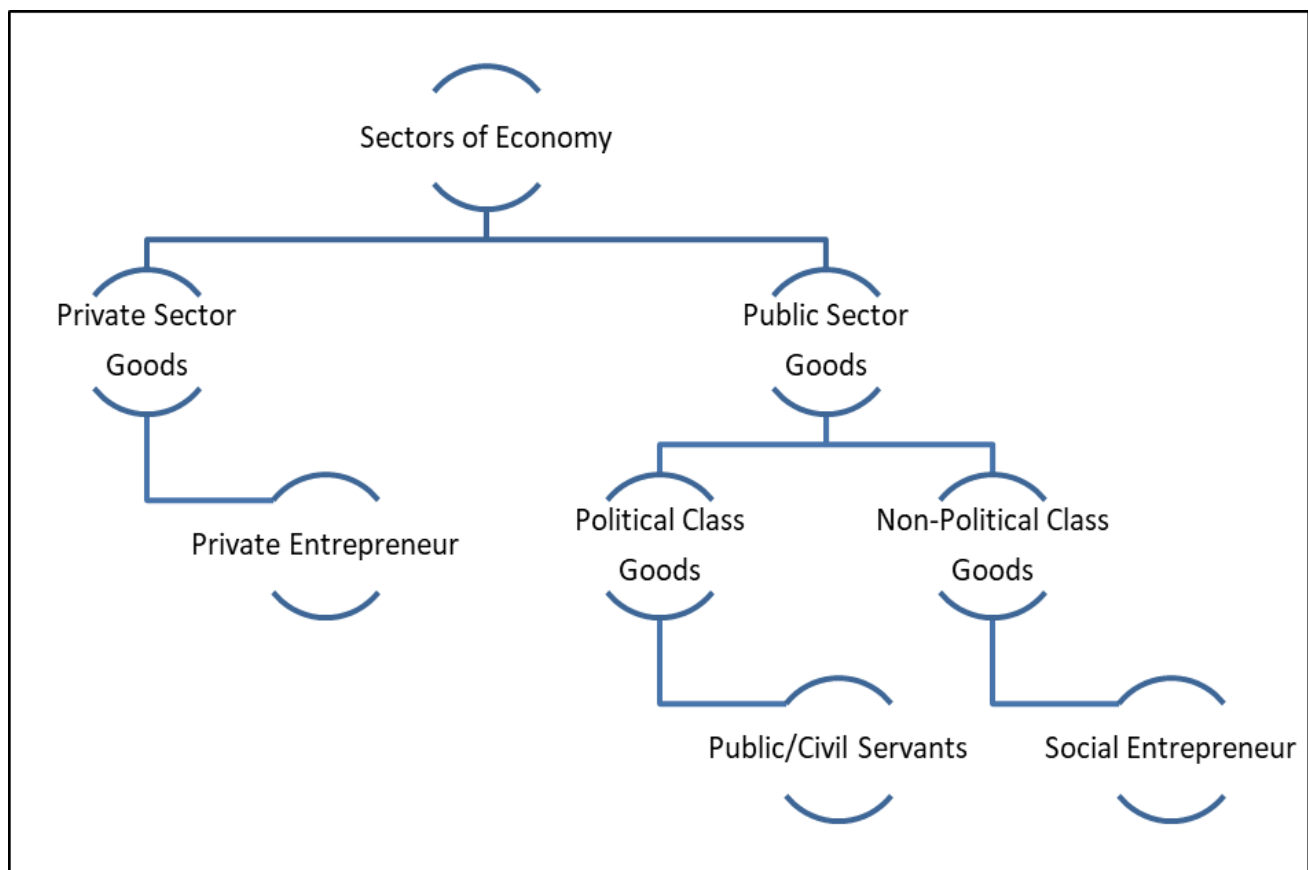
- There is currently a gap in the Ghanaian education sector regarding the provision of social entrepreneurship and innovation skills.
- A greater awareness of how social enterprise organisations actually function is needed, as the key messages presented in [Figure 3](#) demonstrates.



**Figure 2: The key messages from the qualitative data themes.**

- Future investment is needed for Ghanaian citizens to set up social enterprise organisations to deal with the key environmental, economic, and social problems in society as shown in [Figure 3](#).
- Private entrepreneurs focus on their private interest first before the public interest, hence the strategic importance of social enterprises for inclusive development.

- The government or the state are expected to provide public goods; however, the sector is crowded with more political ambition than social good.
- The legal framework that can facilitate the operations of social entrepreneurs in Ghana is a policy on social enterprises.
- Social entrepreneurs can contribute effectively to addressing unemployment and environmental degradation when differentiating between political and non-political class goods, as shown in [Figure 3](#).



**Figure 3: Reclassification of the economic sector.**

## Conclusion

- This policy brief discusses social enterprise as a business tool for creating change at the community level as the catalyst for national, economic, and social change. Social enterprise operates at the borders between the public and private sectors.
- The commonality of social enterprise is to create a significant societal impact and to generate jobs in the communities they serve, especially for university graduates. This can be made

possible when our universities come up with curricula that focus more on societal issues and the need for reclassification of the sectors of the economy.

- This creates a wider horizon for entrepreneurs and prospective entrepreneurs to capitalise on, rather than modelling their businesses on industry needs and challenges.
- Support for social enterprise is growing, and countries such as Ghana are actively engaged in entrepreneurial activities with a social objective.
- Consequently, building social enterprise skills into the higher education framework would significantly enhance graduate employability skills and environmental consciousness.

## Policy Recommendations

Further to the evidence in this policy brief the authors recommend the following:

1. Creation of a new sector that specifically focuses on social goods. The central piece of the proposed sector is to devise new ways of driving social entrepreneurship, innovation, training and skills for young citizens who are unemployed, while also considering the protection of the natural environment.
2. A social curriculum skills audit should take place in all areas of the education sector in Ghana. In partnership with the newly proposed sector, the authors of this report would develop a new social enterprise youth model (SEYM). It is envisaged that developing a new SEYM would create a new framework to mitigate the challenges presented by youth unemployment and environmental degradation in Ghana.
3. A social enterprise policy should be drafted to provide a legal structure for social enterprises and entrepreneurs.
4. The authors of this policy brief also suggest that a consultation exercise should take place within government, and with other external stakeholders such as Social Enterprise Ghana, to see what other aspects should be included in the social entrepreneurship, innovation, training and skills provision for young citizens.

Crucially, it is felt that the implementation of the above four recommendations would provide a solution-focused framework to address the current social, environmental, and economic problems Ghana is facing as the country adapts to the post Covid epoch.

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