



FROM FRAGMENTATION TO INTEGRATION:
REDESIGNING GHANA'S YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
SYSTEM FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-TO-WORK
TRANSITION

POLICY BRIEF

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Executive Summary

Ghana's youth development system is currently characterized by a structural misalignment between education and economic participation, alongside a fragmented institutional framework that limits effectiveness. At the heart of structural misalignment lies a systematic displacement of skills development, work experience, and entrepreneurial skills training, which is supposed to come after the completion of formal education. The resulting long and indefinite period referred to as 'waithood' made governments introduce several programs designed to address the problem after young people have received basic education.

These efforts resulted in the emergence of such institutions as the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MYDE), the National Youth Authority (NYA), the Youth Employment Agency (YEA), the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP), and the National Service Scheme (NSS). Each of these institutions has its own specific mandate; however, the functions of institutions overlap significantly. As a result, there is an excessive number of bodies working at cross-purposes, which results in inefficiency, increased administrative cost, inequality in accessing programs, and poor employment outcomes for young people.

International experiences show that most effective youth development systems feature the combination of integrating youth development into sectoral ministries (e.g., education, labour, agriculture, and health) while maintaining strong central coordination. In contrast, Ghana's current approach relies on parallel youth focussed agencies operating largely outside the core structures that drive economic transformation.

The policy options under consideration are continuing the existing system, albeit with enhanced coordination; full mainstreaming of youth development into all ministries; and the use of a hybrid consolidation approach. While the continuation option will ensure institutional consistency, it will not solve problems of duplication and inefficiency. The full mainstreaming option will allow high consistency with global best practices, but it is

highly risky and politically difficult to implement.

The proposed strategy is based on the hybrid consolidation model. According to this strategy, a new entity should be created – the National Youth Transition Authority (NYTA) that would take control over program implementation, funding, and accessibility to opportunities. At the same time, the MYDE would become responsible for youth development policy coordination and oversight would be assigned to the NYA. The introduction of the Youth Desks in relevant ministries should be undertaken.

Transition from fragmentation to consolidation will help create an effective youth development system that will improve the transition from schools to workplaces, avoid duplication and inefficiencies, increase equity and effectiveness of investments in youth programs.

Background and Context: Systemic Misplacement of Preparation and Institutional Fragmentation.

The present architecture of youth development is defined by a systemic displacement of preparation in which meaningful productivity-focused training has been deferred to the post-formal schooling phase, as opposed to being incorporated in it.

Young people in the ages of 15 and 25 pass through the Senior High School and tertiary education years which ought to be the most intense period of economic participation preparation. It is these years that people are most flexible, most receptive to new knowledge and best placed to experiment, fail and develop.

Rather, the system in Ghana considers these early years as purely academic with practical skills, work exposure, and entrepreneurial attitudes being post-graduate in the form of youth programmes. This time dislocation and misalignment has created a crowded, chaotic, and systemic youth development empowerment problem (the "waithood") that has resulted in governments creating so many overlapping youth intervention programs that operate as afterthoughts to the failure of the formal

education system to adequately transition youth into work.

Instead of being integrated into the early development of every citizen, youth empowerment has become a reactionary crisis-management tool, leading to a fragmented landscape of agencies in the youth sector that compete for the same shrinking budgets while the fundamental school-to-work transition remains broken.

Ghana's Youth Institutions: Mandates and Characteristics.

- I. **Ministry of Youth Development & Empowerment (MYDE):** The ministry is established in Jan 2025 through EI 1, 2025 after the government has split youth from sports. Its mandate is policy formulation, coordination, and M&E of youth programs. In practice, MYDE's main function so far has been oversight: it sets strategic priorities and evaluates agencies.
- II. **National Youth Authority (NYA):** Created by Act 939 (2016) to formulate youth policies and implement programs. In law, NYA is an umbrella for *promotion of youth welfare*, but it also runs direct training camps and outreach.

III. **Youth Employment Agency (YEA):** The YEA is established by Act 887 (2015) specifically for job creation. Its objects are to develop, coordinate and facilitate the creation of jobs for youth. YEA is a *one-stop shop* for employment and entrepreneurship, running various employment modules.

IV. **National Entrepreneurship & Innovation Programme (NEIP):** The NEIP is a flagship entrepreneurship initiative (launched 2019) providing funding, incubation and training for startups. It was created by Executive action (no standalone Act) under the Office of the President, but now falls under MYDE's oversight.

V. **National Service Scheme (NSS):** The NSS was created by Act 426 (1980) to place graduates in one-year national service. It operated under the Ministry of Education but now under the MYDE. NSS's mandate is limited to TVET and university graduates, whereas YEA serves all youth.

Each of these youth institutions and agencies have its own boards, staff and budget. A comparison to roles and overlapping responsibilities are outlined.

Agency	Legal Basis	Core Mandate	Key Programs	Overlap Areas
NYA	Act 939 (2016)	Youth welfare & development policies	Skills camps, youth events	Entrepreneurship training (overlaps YEA/NEIP), youth forums
YEA	Act 887 (2015)	Create jobs & careers for youth	Job Corps, livelihood modules, apprenticeships	Skills training (with NYA), placements (with NSS)
NEIP	Executive (2019)	Support youth entrepreneurship	Startup grants, incubators, Adwumawura jobs	Business training (similar to YEA), partial grant overlap
NSS	Act 426 (1980)	Post-education national service	Graduate placements	Placement/training (overlaps YEA modules)
MYDE	E.I. 1, 2025	Policy, coordination, M&E	–	Oversees all above, but no direct programs

These agencies are overlapping in that they target the same aspects skills training, entrepreneurship, apprenticeship, and job placement, but they all administer their interventions post formal education.

The February 2026 MYDE harmonization conference with the CEOs of NYA, YEA, NEIP and the Director-General of the National Service Authority expressly acknowledged that a fragmented strategy has frequently watered down effectiveness, but the post-education orientation is the same. The consequence is that the same statutory funds (e.g. 5 percent of DACF to NYA and 10 per cent to YEA that were omitted in the 2026 formula) are being competed over and there is invariably one-person beneficiary syndrome.

Fragmentation, Duplication and Gaps

Weak Coordination: Despite MYDE's creation, there is no single coordinating mechanism for a mainstreamed model such as countries like the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia who have embraced the integrated (mainstreamed) youth development model, in which the youth policy is incorporated in the existing ministries and not administered by separate agencies.

Under such systems, institutions of education, labor, health, and social services all have youth-oriented programs in their respective programs, and there are central coordination devices that keep all these programs in order and accountable. This would minimize redundancy, enhance efficiency and increase the correlation between education, skills acquisition and employment.

Duplication: Overlapping mandates YEA, NEIP, and NYA create a redundant program that duplicate start-up, grants, toolkits and travel stipends for labor migration lead to redundant programs which overlap startup grants, toolkits and travel stipends in labor migration. This coordination failure is enhanced by similar incentives provided by the GEA and movement

of NABCO modules into YEA which results in program hopping and high level of budget waste. It is imperative to centralize these interventions to remove administrative overheads and to perform an efficient distribution of the state resources.

Inequality & Gaps: Competition for funding tends to favour Accra and big regions. Rural youth often lack access because no agency consistently operates nationwide. The "one-person beneficiary syndrome" often occurs. Well-connected youth navigate multiple programs, while many are left out. The Ghana Youth Federation (GYF) and press have complained about these inequities in 2025-26 budget debates regarding YEA and GYF being side-lined in District Common Fund allocations.

Administrative Overhead: Operating multiple parallel agencies create significant financial strain. Each Agency has a CEO, board, and staff Streamlining these agencies would put more money back into training and jobs.

Education - Work Mismatch: Without a unified pipeline, many graduates cycle through NSS and then YEA without finding permanent work. TVET programs are poorly integrated with ministry job quotas, leaving a gap between the skills youth possess and the specific needs of employers.

International Models & Lessons

United States (IWGYP): The USA has no single youth agency instead, it has integrated youth programs in 21 federal departments that are coordinated through the inter agency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP) and share a portal. Each sector (Education, Labor, Agriculture, Justice) runs youth-targeted programs with clear specializations. This avoids duplication by design: e.g., Labor handles vocational training, USDA handles 4-H and agri-youth, Justice handles juvenile justice. Ghana could emulate this by giving line ministries explicit youth mandates and tracking them.

United Kingdom: The 2022 National Youth Strategy of England focuses on a cross-government strategy. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) does not have direct responsibility, but the implementation is distributed among Education, Health and other areas. The approach focuses on results, including skills, mental health and inclusion, and financing is done through existing departments and local authorities instead of a dedicated youth bureaucracy.

Commonwealth Guidelines: The Commonwealth Secretariat advocates mainstreaming youth, through incorporating youth priorities in every ministry. In practice, the policy of youth is horizontal and implementation must take place via vertical sectors. They also recommend high-level coordination bodies. In practice, countries like Rwanda and Kenya have youth desks in each ministry under a coordinating ministry.

Special agencies may be used to facilitate the fast implementation of a program, but the long-term effect relies on the alignment with the priorities of the sector. The lack of co-ordination between the programs is the fundamental issue in Ghana, rather than the lack of programs.

Stakeholder & Political Analysis

MYDE/Youth Minister: As the central political authority on youth, the ministry is likely to prioritize budget control and institutional autonomy to demonstrate results. Probably supports the status quo (or even new agencies) as it increases influence.

Sector Ministries: (Education, Agriculture, etc.) Although these ministries are central to sectors that shape youth outcomes, they have not been very active in youth-focused interventions. It may be opposed to be empowered with youth responsibilities as it is more work but can be encouraged through earmarked funds or quotas.

Parliament/MPs: Youth programs often function as instruments of patronage particularly through NSS placements, NABCO, and YEA slots. The consolidation of agencies would involve the assistance of MPs (amendment of Acts, absorption of personnel). They may be afraid of having reduced control of projects within their constituencies.

District Assemblies: District Assemblies face persistent constraints in financing youth initiatives and have advocated for dedicated DACF allocations to institutions such as NYA and YEA. They can be in favour of decentralization to increase local voices, but fear that central integration will reduce local budgets.

Ghana Youth Federation (GYF): This is a new statutory youth umbrella (Act 939) that seeks to organize youth groups. GYF supports the youth voice and may prefer a single approach of the youth fund but is cautious of anything that waters down a core youth agency.

Development Partners (World Bank, UNDP, GIZ): Development partners generally favour coordinated results based systems given that these partners have funded multiple youth initiatives and would prefer effective for which they prefer outcomes-based coordination. These partners may likely support and finance transition reforms.

Private Sector: The private sector is likely to support reforms that support or integrate youth development into sectoral systems particular where training aligns with industry needs with strong links to skills-to-employment.

This explains that the reform of youth policy in Ghana is not only a technical matter but also a political and institutional balancing act in which each party, government ministries, Parliament, local authorities, development partners and the private sector, have various interests, incentives

and concerns. This means that any effort to integrate or restructure the system will hinge on the management of these competing priorities, buy-in and alignment of incentives to make reform possible and effective.

Policy Options

The overall redesign of the youth development architecture in Ghana must be evaluated with a keen consideration of the possible policy directions. The latter options offer different solutions, and each of them has its implications on the efficiency of the institution, political viability, and the long-term effect.

Alternative 1: Continuous and Enhancement of the Existing Structure.

This alternative will maintain the current institutional structure of the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MYDE), with the National Youth Authority (NYA), Youth Employment Agency (YEA), National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP), and National Service Scheme (NSS). Mechanisms like an inter-agency youth council would enhance coordination, and budgets would be allocated separately.

Pros:

- i. Maintains institutional clarity and program focus.
- ii. Minimal legal reform is required, and no repeal of current Acts.
- iii. Has a high profile, visible youth-based ministry at the Cabinet level.
- iv. Assures continuity of current programs and initiatives.

Cons:

- i. Maintains current overlaps, e.g. duplicative training modules across agencies.
- ii. Has fairly high administrative expenses because of several parallel structures.

- iii. Does not adequately resolve inefficiencies and duplication challenges.
- iv. Offers poor incentives to sector ministries to incorporate youth-based approaches.
- v. Further develops the one-person syndrome, in which access and coordination are highly dependent on individuals, as opposed to systems.

Alternative 2: Complete Mainstreaming in All Ministries.

This option suggests the abolition of independent youth agencies and the introduction of youth-oriented departments to all sector ministries (e.g., Youth in Agriculture, Youth in Energy, Youth in Technical Education). The current agencies like YEA, NEIP, and NSS would be either integrated into sector-based programs or combined into one new structure. All the ministries would have to set aside a specific amount of their budget to youth programming which will be funded through a dedicated youth fund.

Pros:

- i. Secures a high level of youth development integration in sectoral development strategies.
- ii. Makes skills training directly related to industry requirements (e.g. youth electricians under the Energy Ministry, youth farmers under Agriculture).
- iii. Eliminates bureaucratic redundancy and overheads.
- iv. Represents global best practices in youth mainstreaming.
- v. Improves fair access by decentralized, sector-based delivery.

Cons:

- i. Dangers of removing a powerful, centralized voice of youth advocacy at the Cabinet level.
- ii. May generate the impressions among youth that they are losing representation and visibility.

- iii. Needs a lot of legal and institutional reorganization, such as the amendment or repeal of several Acts.
- iv. Risks that ministries might over time tend to undermine youth desks.
- v. Has high transition costs such as retraining of staff and redesigning of the system.
- vi. Probably faced with political opposition by the already established agencies, boards and Parliament.

Alternative 3: Hybrid Consolidation (Recommended)

This alternative is a combination of institutional consolidation and strategic mainstreaming. It suggests the establishment of a National Youth Transition Authority (NYTA) to consolidate program delivery system, funding and intake system of youth up to a certain age limit. The main operations of YEA, NSS, and NEIP would be combined into NYTA as specialized departments.

The NYA would be restructured into an oversight and control agency to audit spending, efficiency and effectiveness of youth related activities in the ministries, and the MYDE would continue to play a role in policy guidance and coordination. Also, there would be mandatory Youth Desks in major sector ministries (e.g., Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health), which would have the mandate to undertake sector-specific youth programs, but report performance to MYDE and NYTA.

Pros:

- i. Balances between institutional focus and cross-sector integration.
- ii. Creates a single point of entry (e.g. one application portal to jobs, training, and grants).
- iii. Eliminates redundancy through the merging of overlapping agencies into one.

- iv. Enhances coordination and has a distinct Cabinet-level youth advocate.
- v. Improves surveillance and data handling by centralized youth database.
- vi. Establishes economies of scale in management and service delivery.

Cons:

- i. Needs legal changes in order to unify the current Acts into a new legislation.
- ii. This introduces complexity in the integration of institutional cultures and systems.
- iii. There is a risk of establishing another silo unless linkages with sector ministries are properly implemented.
- iv. Effective leadership and disciplined execution are critical in ensuring that the company does not go back to the old inefficiencies.

Recommendation

The hybrid consolidation model is the most viable and moderate of the three alternatives. It directly responds to structural duplication and maintains a robust policy voice of youth at the ministerial level. This model is consistent with both the best practice of governance and the realities of the world by integrating both centralized implementation and sector-level integration. It allows economies of scale without compromising visibility, coordination or accountability.

Implementation Roadmap (Hybrid Model)

Implementation must be done in organized stages to facilitate the smooth transition:

1. Stakeholder Consensus Building (03 months)

It should be a high-level task force that is headed by Cabinet and includes MYDE, Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR), NYA, YEA, NSS, Ghana Youth Federation (GYF) and development partners. The goal is to perfect the reform

structure for effective design and president directive.

2. Legal Harmonization (3–12 months)

This step includes creating and enacting legislative changes to facilitate transition:

- i. Repeal or amend the Youth Employment Agency Act 2015 (Act 887), the NSS Act 1980, the NYA Act 2016.
- ii. Introduce a new National Youth Transition Authority Act to specify the role and form of NYTA.
- iii. Reform the Civil Service Act to institutionalize Youth Desks in ministries and reallocate the NSS to NYTA.

3. Institutional Transition (6-18 months)

- i. Create NYTA headquarters and relocate assets, personnel, and programs of YEA, NSS and NEIP.
- ii. Establish leadership and operational structures.
- iii. Phase out current programs to NYTA, but permit current beneficiaries to finish their cycles by existing rules.
- iv. Establish and institutionalize Youth Desks in major ministries with specific budgetary allocations (e.g. allocate 5 percent of budgets to youth activities).

4. Data and Systems Integration.

To facilitate tracking, planning, and performance monitoring, a single Youth Management Information System is to be created which will combine the databases of NYA with the data of NYTA programs.

5. Capacity Building and Monitoring & Evaluation (Ongoing)

- i. Train NYTA personnel and Youth Desk officers.

- ii. Launch a centralized digital platform (e.g., youth.gov.gh) to provide a one-stop access point for all youth services.
- iii. MYDE should publish an annual youth performance scorecard covering reach, outcomes, and efficiency.
- iv. Provide transitional support mechanisms, including stipends for affected staff during restructuring.

Proposed Transition Phases (Simplified)

Phase 1- Planning: Stakeholder task force and mandate approval

Phase 2- Legislation: Drafting and passage of reforms

Phase 3- NYTA Setup: Establish authority and leadership

Phase 4- Program Migration: Integrate NSS and YEA programs

Phase 5- Youth Desks: Operationalize ministry units

Phase 6- Pilot & Scale: Launch unified systems and expand

Costs, Risks and Mitigation

Costs: There will be short term costs in merging (severance for duplicate positions, IT systems integration) however, long term savings come from fewer overhead costs.

Political Resistance: there will be political resistance where MPs or boards may fight changes. This could be mitigated through inclusiveness during the early stages and benefit sharing.

Operational Disruptions: There will be operational Disruptions where program beneficiaries could fall through the cracks. This could be mitigated through a phased handover with transition managers.

Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators

Key metrics (to report annually) should include:

- i. Youth Program Reach: % of target youth enrolled in any state youth program (by region).
- ii. Employment Outcomes: 12-month employment rate of program graduates (via NYTA tracking).
- iii. Duplication Reduction: Number of parallel programs eliminated (e.g. separate NSS & YEA placement programs become one).
- iv. Efficiency: Admin cost as % of total youth budget (should decline).
- v. Satisfaction: Youth satisfaction survey of government job/support services.
- vi. A policy oversight committee (possibly MYDE's PPBME Directorate) should publish a mid-term evaluation of during each program year or period.

Conclusion

One of the most pressing issues affecting youth development in Ghana is associated with the fragmented nature of existing youth programs. Despite the existence of numerous programs aimed at youth integration into society, youth development programs lack coherence and fail to link education and skills development to employment. The reason is that Ghana uses a multiplicity of youth-related organizations, each responsible for implementing a certain type of program in parallel with other initiatives conducted by similar or dissimilar organizations. The lack of alignment between programs leads to their inefficiency in terms of producing desired results.

To address the issue, it is necessary to shift the focus from the implementation of multiple programs to youth development embedded in the general development strategy and process. It means that instead of using a multiplicity of youth-focused programs, the government needs to integrate youth development into the

institutional structure and operations of the state. In other words, a new structure should allow the country to prepare its young population for productive engagement in the economic processes that occur.

The hybrid model of agency consolidation that we propose would present an effective way of making such a move to occur. It combines benefits and features of all types of models mentioned above to produce a unique approach that takes advantage of a consolidated implementation authority and improved coordination among sector ministries. Thus, this approach ensures efficient implementation without any unnecessary centralization and guarantees a policy voice for youth, better coordination, higher efficiency, and better pipeline from education to work.

It should be noted, however, that a change of this nature would require good implementation of the strategy and a large political will. In addition, institutional and transitional costs will have to be anticipated and managed appropriately by stakeholders.

Nonetheless, this would help to develop a new, proactive and integrated model of youth development. This model is oriented at positive results rather than programs and activities. Such an institution-building model can help to establish an efficient transition mechanism that would make young people able not just to participate in the economy of their country, but to shape it and guide it towards further transformations.

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