

# UCC Alumni congress speech

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“Repositioning the Youth for Responsible and Productive Citizenship: The Role of Civic Education, Critical Thinking, and Employability Skills.”

Ladies and gentlemen, thanks for the kind introduction. It's a pleasure for me to share a point of view on approaches to developing a responsible and productive society and thank you for inviting me. My congratulations in your 60th anniversary launch

There's no doubt that every generation ought to be concerned what would happen to their survivors and we all go through lengths to organize a future for their dependents, often youth

By this choice of topic and ensuing discussion, we will also be contributing similarly to a larger future for our nation

Satisfactory treatment of the subject goes well beyond an individual mind. It is exactly these kinds of problems that behold us to unite our diversities in search for effective solutions

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A starting point in our discussions might be to look at what to reposition, the target youth potential, it's characteristics, our values and methods that might lead somewhere better. Of course, as computer scientist, when I have noticed say we talk geeky, technology

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Responsible

Whilst there may be varied view about what being responsible means, it connotes to most being dependable, keeping promises, and honoring commitments

A more important meaning of being responsible in the context of the subject, is doing things for public good, with self

Hence we wish to reposition attitudes of youth to be more dependable and we are going to have pass on how to include others in initiatives and increase empathy to reduce destruction and waste.

In much of work I do as a computer scientist of old and increasingly what we all doing, things must occur at the time it's supposed to and no earlier or later and has global impact. Thus, African time would no longer exist (Slide 4)

Productive

We are by the topic agreeing to reposition to work harder and smarter to develop capacity to produce larger amounts of goods, crops, commodities, valuable knowledge and skills

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We posit that measure of responsibility and capacity to produce are the functions we shall like to optimize in overall objectives

[We can imagine everyone strive to be the most productive they can be

and evaluate themselves continually in self criticism ]

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We have to examine what the target youth might compromise and assess potential for repositioning

The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Ghana reports the number of people who were between the ages of 15 and 24 years as nearly 6 million, according to statistical service while the population was 31.07 million. This means 20% of population falls in the category

“youth”, while life expectancy is 64.42 and Median age of 21. The median age is near the midpoint of our youth definition above, suggesting that the potential impact of interventions would be long lasting

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One wonders what people in ages 15-24 expected to do? Normally, this group should be in school/ apprenticeship and working part time to supplement schooling

With about 6 million as potential let's the total enrollment in education would be interesting.

The Tertiary education enrollment is said to be about 547k 2020 while Total SHS enrollment is about 404k in 2020 making a total of 951k. Though, this is very rough back of envelope calculation it is quite telling. Out of 6 million potential we serve only 1 million. What are the rest doing?

An even more staggering picture emerges from the age structure in the 2020 data which shows ages 0-14 is about twice the youth. Thus, in a decade the youth opportunities would be much larger, doubled  
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Clearly, if no deliberate attention is committed to youth empowerment



with education, capacity building, skills development to increase productivity, there would be immense tension in youth expectations in very near future. We should be building up all reserves we can, to help contain the anticipated pain point. Consuming the future now would be dangerous and will worsen the upcoming tension

We must reposition this 20% for  
Responsible and Productive  
Citizenship

With that behind us, let's now explore how we might reposition with Role of Civic Education, Critical Thinking, and Employability Skills in mind

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## Reposition for responsible citizenship

To kick start this discussion every one would agree that a dose of good old tradition and values would help bring order created by ability to peer with anyone. Ability to talk to anyone would not immediately make us at par. We need discipline and shared community values

We need encourage honest citizenship who would admit what is not right at all times and define specific real problems to solve else we will inevitably make wrong

decisions. We have to avoid solutions in search of problems which are losses  
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Opportunities in solving identified problems are often manifold and encourage multiple implementation of solutions. We should be open to new ways as long as conform to standards (eg safety)

Adoption of technology in society is the only available leverage as it is dependent on skilled educated Human Resources. We are blessed with the Human Resources, because we exist and we are globally

competitive. What the repositioning would do is scale this by increasing the quality and capacity of the large youth population

Not everyone is cut out to do business but familiarity with Entrepreneurship and management exposure are very useful to all

Most important of all is we wish to have well rounded citizens. “Invest in people” does not mean eat their lunch as some may profess. It means sacrificing now to create reserves for a future after us

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## Productive

To be productive is to be down to earth and hands on in all fields; talking and discussion is not sufficient. One has to think of products and packaging for use

Knowing our capabilities/strength is extremely important to this age group, youth. I recall while I did not study zoology in 6th form, I attempted to study pre medicine at Legon in 1968, with negative consequences. I learned my strength was in physical sciences and thereafter succeeded in multitude ways to my surprise

Specialize in something as things tend to consolidate and become

specialized but be aware and comfortable with related fields

Produce things, digital or physical, and insist IPR, marks as many corporate battles of the future will be on rights, as we become more and more a digital society

Focus on local services and attempt to solve our own problems. Expand gradually after adoption to similar context. The era of knockout punches are over. We are coming way too late in the digital evolution. Only points no knockouts

The game is to develop new markets for which you are an early provider.

When come later can only cry about unfairness and nobody will listen. If regulation takes long, like it does in Ghana, we have forfeited the sector to global competition. Perhaps, that is unintentional but not good news for pioneers

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Role of civic education

We have to know our rights and responsibilities as citizens to contain deviants in society. We have a further responsibility to help the not so fortunate, not well educated, to have their rights protected from others including governments who can be easily abused in our region

As good citizens we should have a genuine desire to add positively to society

Sadly, our society is rapidly becoming a litigant society which will ruin our quest to develop. To develop is to reason together. To litigate is to say am right and the other is wrong while to develop is to understand we both could be wrong

Similar to being litigants we are also enameled with voting instead of finding common ground/consensus for progress



At all times avoid temptation for poor judgement

To address both issues we have to decentralize and reduce centers of power  
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Critical thinking

We must change our decision processes to become more evidence based. We should not play GOD as we are a bad copy whose wishes are whimsical

We should be Solution oriented and avoid dwelling on problems.  
Problems are to be noted and solved.  
There are so many problems one can

spend lifetime talking about problems  
and look good but achieve nothing

We ought to be more open to new/  
different ideas and look to combine  
complementary ideas

Let's move away from emotional  
solutions to appreciate the merits of  
proposed solutions

Build bottom up decision making  
processes it's more enriching  
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Decision process

Thus our decision process in  
addressing the complex issues needs

to be interdisciplinary so as to engage expertise for solutions

It is not unusual for a scientific and technical solution to evoke challenges for economists, lawyers, managers, policy authority, civil liberties, public interests and so on

All too often we have these discussions after the impact of the innovation making resolutions abrupt and sometimes unworkable

In the adoption of modern technology it is preferable to work through multi stakeholder communities following bottom up decision practices where a

community with its diversity address  
issues openly

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Employable skill

As pointed to earlier our opportunities  
are in knowledge intensive carriers  
and given that knowledge is retained  
in communities we have to ensure  
the trained professionals work in  
communities

Naturally, our goals of higher  
productivity makes us gravitate to  
training youth for Self employment.  
On the other hand not all of us can  
be self employed hence  
Development planning in technology

would include creating ecosystem of satellite companies working together

Policy environment should favor local service providers as we decentralize

We at UCC know very well that learning is continuous and winners can occur at any age

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We have had discussions on Open data but it is yet taken hold. The importance of Discipline and commitment cannot be overstated  
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As a technological revolutionary having in some techno liberation struggle to ensure tech is not used to recolonize Africa, my attention was drawn to One million coders program (omcp), a proposal in the NDC manifesto, as worth considering to address the Youth challenge under discussion. Though this is bold, it needs to be more aggressive perhaps 5 million target is befitting to address creating a savvy IT workforce. The proposal might be extended to include what coding, what employment chain to establish in support, what level of coders, market to absorb, what local ecosystem appropriate, accompanying certification, role of

universities as the apex, role of private sector, needed professional body, how to curb brain drain, diaspora engagement

We should improve the national service program for technologists to ensure continuous education without disruption. When computer scientists are assigned randomly to industry it disrupts flow of youth into the workforce because after national service, the employers cannot find them.

In conclusion, there are things we have to do and there are things youth would do

UCC has been at forefront of technology development in Africa from computing, to internet and now to blockchain. We shall continue in the struggle for technology emancipation

Thank you for your attention