

Good Practice Compendium



Upkilling African VET to Step forward Smart Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This Compendium collects the initial stages of the SMARTSTEP project, which endeavors to enhance entrepreneurship education in Africa, focusing on Cameroon and Ghana.

The report compiles findings from a comprehensive investigation conducted by a consortium of experts. This work employed a specialized methodology combining desk research and input from local partners, featuring immersive study visits and a detailed survey initiative within vocational training centers in the 2 target countries.

The document represents the collective insights of eight reputable European and African organizations in education and entrepreneurship. It culminates in outlining a strategic roadmap for the project with good practices and actionable recommendations, aiming to establish a transversal program that empowers vocational training centers, educators, and students to succeed as entrepreneurs.



Executive Summary

This document gathers the findings derived from the preliminary months of implementation of the SMARTSTEP project. With the primary goal of improving the quality of entrepreneurship education in Africa, the SMARTSTEP consortium initiated its efforts by conducting an in-depth investigation into the landscape of entrepreneurship education in Cameroon and Ghana.

The present report synthesizes the data collected by the committee of experts, carefully selected from the partnership, implementing a working methodology tailored to the project's objectives. This methodology combines desk research with insights gathered from local partners in Ghana and Cameroon. Furthermore, the report highlights two immersive study visits to both countries, focused on engaging with key stakeholders. These visits included explorations of vocational training centers, interviews with students and educators, and observations of the labor market and its challenges.

Additionally, a comprehensive survey initiative was undertaken in vocational training centers, targeting students, alumni turned entrepreneurs, and trainers. The survey aimed to assess their perceptions of entrepreneurship education, post-training aspirations, and the obstacles encountered while launching their business ideas.

This document reflects the insights gathered from representatives of eight European and African organizations, each renowned for their expertise in education and entrepreneurship. It culminates in listing the good practices collected between Ghana and Cameroon and outlining the strategic steps to be undertaken by the consortium throughout the project's lifecycle, ultimately steering it toward its ultimate objective: the creation of a comprehensive transversal program. This program seeks to equip vocational training centers, their educators, and students with the essential tools needed to become successful entrepreneurs, fostering an environment of mentorship within their respective centers and facilitating the realization of their business ideas.

The present document offers a comprehensive view, presenting both quantitative and qualitative data collected by the committee of experts, meticulously analyzed by the report's authors. It concludes by presenting good practices and actionable recommendations and an implementation plan for the forthcoming two years of the project.



Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 – About the project

Africa's working-age population is expected to reach 1 billion in the next 25 years, according to the World Bank, emphasizing the importance of job creation and enterprise development. The current education system is at capacity, and the demand will only increase. Africa will represent over 40% of the school-age population in low- and middle-income countries by 2050 (World Bank, 2023). The central question, then, revolves around harnessing the potential of future youth entrepreneurs and maximizing their chances of success.

Key challenges faced by entrepreneurs, including limited access to finances, markets, education, and mentors, are well-recognized. Youth entrepreneurs face additional obstacles due to perceptions of inexperience.

To address these issues, the European Commission and the African Union have initiated the "AU-EU Skills for Youth Employment Program" to boost and promote the TVET sector. The African Union's TVET Continental Strategy promotes skill acquisition through training that responds to labor market demands, fosters entrepreneurship, and encourages innovation.

At the 6th EU-AU Summit, education was a focal point, with an urgent commitment to equipping young people with the skills needed for the evolving job landscape and global challenges. The Team Europe initiative supports African countries in providing vocational training aligned with labor market opportunities to enhance employment prospects and drive job creation.

It is in this context in which Smart Step is conceived. The Smart Step project has the following objectives:

- 1 Exchange of Best Practices:** The project seeks to establish a comprehensive and collaborative system for the exchange of best practices, learning processes, and activities among its partners. This initiative aims to create a space for mutual knowledge sharing and growth.
- 2 Entrepreneurship Training:** SMART STEP aims to introduce specific training programs on entrepreneurship. These programs target not only VET learners but also VET teachers and tutors. The objective is to inspire them to think creatively about enterprises that adhere to sustainable innovation, production, and inclusiveness, all tailored to the unique economic environments of their respective regions.

The project's working methodology is divided into three clearly distinct phases:

- 1 Research Phase:** In this initial phase, a committee of experts conducts an in-depth analysis of the current state of entrepreneurship at the national level, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. This analysis serves as the foundation for outlining a comprehensive roadmap for the training and capacity-building of Vocational Education and Training (VET) centers in Ghana and Cameroon. This roadmap will serve as a guiding framework for the project's implementation.
- 2 Creation of an Online Platform:** The second phase involves the development of an online platform that fosters both intra and intercontinental connections. This platform serves as a hub for connecting entrepreneurs, showcasing best practices, and providing a virtual learning environment for young aspiring entrepreneurs. It facilitates networking, knowledge sharing, and virtual learning opportunities.
- 3 Development of Training and Mentoring Programs:** The final phase focuses on the creation of training and mentorship programs tailored to VET centers. These programs empower educators and managers by equipping them with entrepreneurship knowledge and skills. Additionally, they establish dedicated incubation spaces within the centers, designed to mentor and nurture young entrepreneurs. These initiatives collectively support the growth of entrepreneurship in the region.

The SMART STEP partnership unites European and African VET schools, European and African youth representatives, private sector stakeholders, young entrepreneurs, civil society members, and experts. Together, the project aims to showcase, share, and engage in discussions surrounding innovative and comprehensive TVET models and programs focused on entrepreneurial upskilling.

The SMART STEP consortium comprises four organizations spanning three European countries (Spain, Italy, Belgium), collectively addressing SMART STEP's requirements as VET providers (Mundus), universities (Universitat Politècnica de València), entrepreneurial entities, and international non-profit organizations with a global youth focus.

Furthermore, the consortium includes six organizations across three African countries (Ghana, Cameroon, and Nigeria), encompassing VET schools, universities, entrepreneurial hubs, and an innovative ICT enterprise.

Mundus, the project coordinator, is a non-profit organization based in Spain and a renowned expert in the field of international mobility, with a core mission of enhancing the employability and future prospects of young individuals. The organization acts as a catalyst, connecting cities, institutions, businesses, educators, and students, all united in their shared commitment to providing youth with opportunities for a brighter future.

VIS (Volunteers for International Development) is an Italian non-profit NGO operating in 40 countries, including Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Their mission centers on strengthening effective Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems, with a particular focus on facilitating the transition from school to quality employment for vulnerable youth and women. VIS adopts a networking approach, building partnerships across public, non-profit, and private sectors to achieve their goals in these regions.

European Entrepreneurs CEA-PME, based in Brussels, represents 26 European SME associations. They work to enhance SME competitiveness by addressing skill shortages. Their strategies involve promoting the Dual System, advocating for lifelong learning and employee mobility through MobiliseSME, and supporting digital expert mobility via DigitaliseSME within the European Single Market. Their ultimate goal is to drive innovation in vocational education and training (VET) to bridge the skills gap and boost member companies' competitiveness.

Universitat Politècnica de València, a leading Spanish technological university, hosts 30,000 students. IDEAS-UPV, under the Vice-rectorate for Students and Entrepreneurship, supports students in launching businesses. Its pillars include fostering an entrepreneurial culture, educating students about startups, mentoring spin-offs, and conducting entrepreneurship research. The institute's team has expertise and connections relevant to the project.

Apodissi is an SME based in Lagos (Nigeria) specialised in knowledge and technology transfer between Africa, Europe and Middle East. They enable local organisations (such as entrepreneurs, emerging start-ups, established indigenous industries, NGOs and public organisations) to exploit and adapt innovative technologies, such as augmented and virtual reality, making them available to the market as products and services for commercial gain or social impact.

INTIME, situated in Bafoussam, West Cameroon, houses 200 students, 50 educators, and 10 administrative staff. Over a decade, it has graduated 400+ BTS and professional bachelor students. INTIME is committed to fostering local development by providing coaching and training in rural regions, targeting youth, young mothers, and vulnerable populations. Their goal is to combat rural migration and reduce fatalities during Sahara and Mediterranean crossings

SSC Ghana is a private entity actively fostering business development and entrepreneurship among Start-ups and MSMEs in Ghana, boasting a nationwide network of 54 centers and collaborative ties with Afrilabs for African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) support.

The Salesians of Don Bosco, West Africa South Province (DBYN) includes VET centres, schools and youth centers in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Togo, and Sierra Leone. Their focus is on Technical and Vocational Training Centres, addressing various needs such as industrial development, post-war reconstruction, children at risk programs, rehabilitation for former child soldiers.

The Don Bosco TVET Centre in Mbimboman, Yaoundé (Cameroon), focuses on underprivileged youth from the Mbimboman district. They offer industrial trade courses (metalwork, carpentry, sewing, soon aluminum carpentry) and various ICT programs. The center currently trains 245 primarily female students and has a team of 28 trainers and administrative staff. It plays a vital role in supporting these students throughout their training and helping them integrate into professional careers or entrepreneurship.

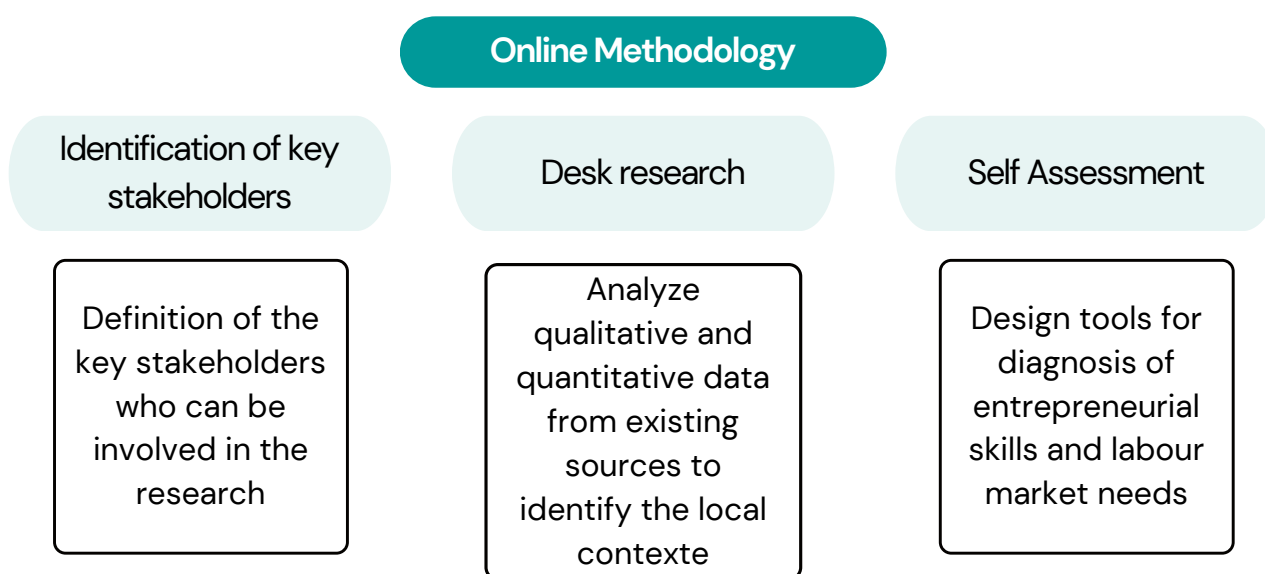
Hence, to accomplish SMART STEP's primary objective, an essential preliminary research phase is required at the outset of implementation. This phase enables the partnership to refine the action plan, identify the most suitable methodologies to work with, and address key challenges and critical focal points. Consequently, this compendium compiles all the findings and insights garnered from six months of work, encompassing both field research and desk research.

1.2 – Methodology

A comprehensive methodology was developed to analyze both quantitatively and qualitatively the context of the two African countries involved in the Smart Step project. This approach aimed to gain insights into the status of entrepreneurial education in Ghana and Cameroon, identify gaps between education and the labor market, and assess the existing policy environment and support for entrepreneurship.

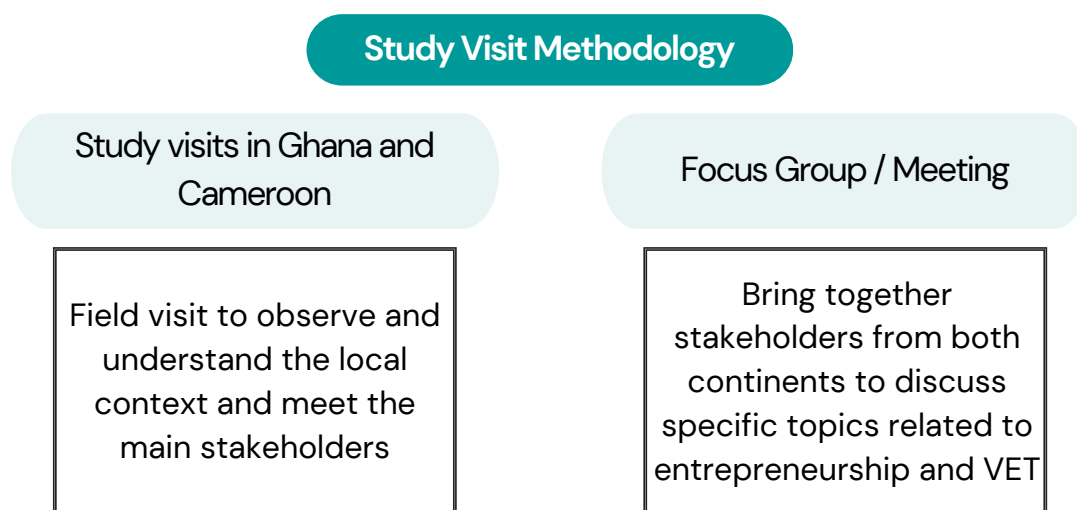
The methodology comprised the following main approaches:

1 – Online Methodology in Quantitative and Qualitative Approach:



- **Identification of Key Stakeholders:** Key stakeholders in Africa and Europe were identified to ensure the research methodology and study visit could benefit from the input and contributions of representatives who possess relevant expertise and knowledge.
- **Desk Research:** Extensive desk research was conducted to analyze qualitative and quantitative data from various sources, including academic literature, policy documents, and reports. This analysis helped identify the local context and provided valuable information for formulating a PESTEL analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal) and SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) specifically for Ghana and Cameroon.
- **Self-Assessment Surveys:** Tailored surveys were designed as diagnostic tools to gather information from various stakeholders, including teachers, students, VET centers, entrepreneurs, and incubators. These surveys provided valuable insights into the current state of entrepreneurial education, identified areas for improvement, and assessed the needs and challenges faced by different stakeholders in the vocational education and entrepreneurship landscape.

2 – The Study Visit Methodology in Qualitative Approach



a) Educational Offer and Entrepreneurial Skills

- **Visit to Technical Institutes:** During the study visits, technical institutes were visited to gain a deep understanding of the education programs focused on entrepreneurship. This involved examining the curriculum, courses offered, and the overall approach to fostering entrepreneurial skills.
- **Focus Groups with Teachers, Tutors, and School Staff:** To comprehend the programs, focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, tutors, and staff members of the technical institutes. This provided insights into the good practices and strategies used to nurture entrepreneurship among students.
- **Focus Groups with Students and Former Students:** To capture the perspectives of the students and the experiences of former students, additional focus group discussions were organized. This helped in understanding their outlook on entrepreneurship and the impact of the educational programs on their entrepreneurial aspirations.

b) Companies and Entrepreneurs

- **Focus Groups with Young Entrepreneurs:** Engaging in focus group discussions with young entrepreneurs allowed for an exploration of the procedures and challenges involved in starting a business in both countries. Additionally, these interactions revealed insights into the available initiatives and support structures for young entrepreneurs.
- **Meetings with Formal and Informal Businesses:** During the study visits, meetings were held with both formal and informal businesses. This served to identify best practices in entrepreneurship and understand how different types of businesses contribute to the economic landscape.

c) Hubs and Incubators Visit

- A series of visits to various hubs and incubators within the countries was conducted. The main purpose was to gain valuable insights into the types of support offered to emerging enterprises. Various strategies and programs available to assist local businesses were identified through focus groups and discussions.

d) Policy Framework

- Multi-stakeholder meetings involving representatives from public institutions, confederations of entrepreneurs, and vocational education and training (VET) providers were conducted to discuss policies supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurial education landscape in Ghana and Cameroon. The data collected through these approaches provided a solid foundation for the subsequent stages of the Smart Step project, enabling the development of targeted interventions and strategies to enhance vocational education, entrepreneurial skills, and overall support for aspiring entrepreneurs in both countries.

1.3 – Limitations

While the SMARTSTEP partnership has endeavored to carry out a thorough research, it is essential to acknowledge potential limitations in the study. Identifying these limitations can help provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research context and the scope of its findings. These include:

- **Limited Geographical Focus:** One of the primary limitations of this study is its geographical focus on Cameroon and Ghana. While these two countries provide valuable insights into entrepreneurship education in Africa, the findings may not be representative of the entire continent. Differences in culture, economic conditions, and educational systems across African nations may limit the generalizability of the recommendations to other regions.
- **Methodological Constraints:** The study's methodology, which combines desk research, input from local partners, immersive study visits, and surveys, offers a comprehensive perspective. However, each method has its limitations. Desk research may rely on available data and might not capture real-time dynamics. Input from local partners may introduce bias, and surveys may be subject to response bias or limited participation.
- **Sampling and Representation:** The study is a collaboration with a consortium of experts from European and African organizations. While this collaboration is valuable, it is essential to recognize that the selection of these experts and organizations may introduce bias. Furthermore, the study's findings may not fully represent the diverse perspectives and experiences of stakeholders in entrepreneurship education. Moreover, despite the large sample of respondents interviewed and TVET centers visited in the 2 countries, it would be ambitious to consider it representative of all the TVET education in Ghana and Cameroon. We need to be aware as well that the situation of employment and entrepreneurship varies among regions in the same country.
- **Temporal Limitations:** The SMARTSTEP project encapsulates the initial stages of its activities. Consequently, the findings and recommendations in this report may not account for long-term trends or evolving conditions in entrepreneurship education. The effectiveness of the proposed roadmap and recommendations may change over time.
- **Resource Constraints:** The study's scope and depth are contingent on available resources, both in terms of funding and personnel. Resource limitations may have impacted the extent of data collection, the comprehensiveness of the investigation, and the depth of analysis.

- **Language and Cultural Barriers:** The report mentions collaboration between European and African organizations. Language and cultural differences may have posed challenges in communication and understanding, potentially influencing the accuracy of data interpretation and analysis.

Acknowledging these limitations helps maintain transparency and credibility in the study, ensuring that readers and stakeholders have a balanced understanding of the research's scope and potential constraints. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying the recommendations in practice.

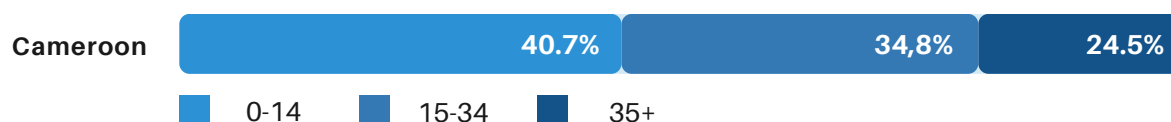
Chapter 2 - Desk Research

2.1 - Cameroon

2.1.1 - Population trends and demographics

As of 2021, Cameroon's total population stood at 26,766 million representing a notable 16% increase from the 2015 figure of 23.050 million¹. This growth trajectory aligns with the broader trend observed in many African countries, where Cameroon boasts an average annual increase of 2.5% from 2015 to 2021². This expansion is particularly pronounced within the youth demographic, illustrating a dynamic and evolving population landscape.

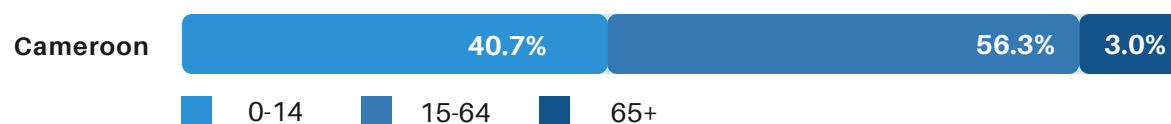
Distribution of population by age focus on youth (UN statistics data)



This demographic shift is notable in Cameroon's population age structure. It is undergoing a transition, moving away from a predominant child population (0-14 years) which constitutes 41% of the total, towards a larger representation of young people aged 15-35 years, making up 35% of the population³.

In terms of gender distribution, there exists a nearly equal divide between males and females, reflecting a balanced representation within the population. Notably, a substantial 57.8% of the population resides in urban areas, drawn by economic opportunities, infrastructure, and amenities typically found in cities. The remaining 42.2% reside in rural regions, often characterized by traditional lifestyles and agricultural livelihoods⁴.

Working Age Population (UN statistics data - 2021)



¹ UN Statistics Division-Demographic Yearbook, 2021-<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/dyb/dybsets/2021.pdf>

² Ibid.

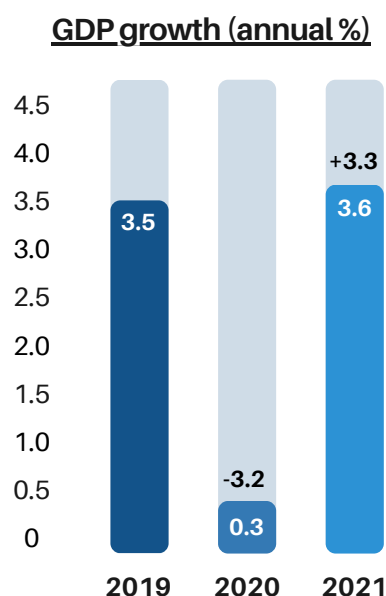
³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

The working-age population (ages 15–64) constitutes a noteworthy 56.3% of the total population⁵. Given the significant number of individuals aged 0–15, it is anticipated that this segment will continue to expand in the forthcoming years, with potential implications for labor markets, education systems, and overall socio-economic development.

2.1.2 Economics trends and youth unemployment

Cameroon represents the largest economy in the CEMAC – accounting for over 60 percent of reserves, over 40 percent of the region’s GDP, and around 55 percent of the total population – the country contributes significantly to the region’s economic development⁶. Cameroon is classified as a lower-middle-income country, with a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$ 43.34 in 2021⁷.



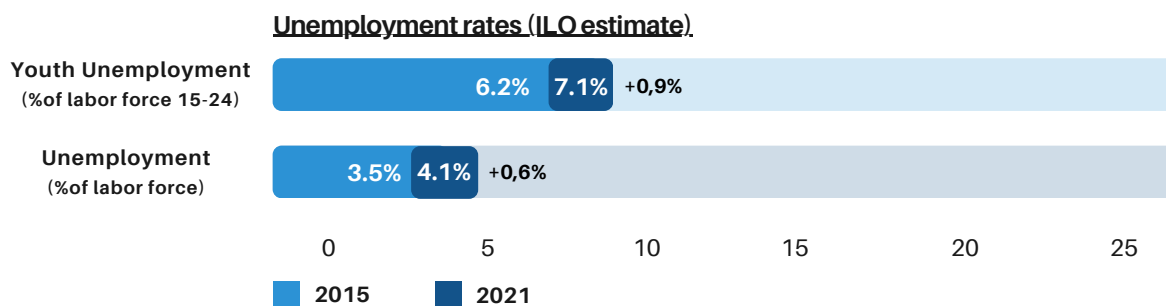
Between 2019 and 2020, the nation experienced an annual average economic decrease rate of 3.2 percent attributed to the pandemic of Covid-19 and the Ukrainian War, which then accelerated to 3.3 percent between 2020 and 2021⁸, largely attributed to substantial public investments in infrastructure, particularly within the energy and transportation sectors.

⁵ UN Statistics Division – Demographic Yearbook, 2021–<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/products/dyb/dybssets/2021.pdf>

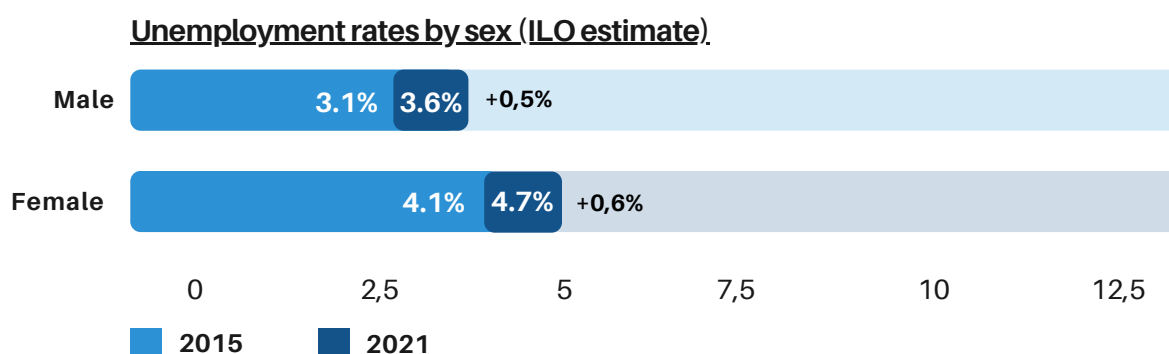
⁶ International Monetary Funds, 2022–<https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2022/076/article-A003-en.xml>

⁷ The World Bank statistics data of Cameroon, 2022– <https://data.worldbank.org/>

⁸ Ibid.



Despite this slight economic development in the last year, youth employment remains a pressing concern in Cameroon. The country's unemployment rate witnessed an increase from 3.5% in 2015 to 4.1% in 2021⁹.



The issue predominantly impacts both women and young people. In 2021, Cameroon's youth unemployment rate reached 7.1%, marking a consistent increase since 2015 when the rate stood at 6.2%. As for women, the rate reached 4.7% in 2021, compared to 3.6% for males, indicating an upward trend for both genders since 2015.

In terms of labor force participation (population ages 15–24 economically active), it stood at 47.49% in 2022¹⁰.

Despite the challenges posed by youth unemployment, Cameroon has made efforts to enhance its Human Development Index (HDI) over the years. As per the UNDP Report from 2019¹¹, the country progressed from the 151st position (HDI of 0.548) out of 188 countries in 2015 to the 153rd position (HDI of 0.563) out of 189 countries. This placed Cameroon in the "average human development" category, signifying advancements in certain social indicators. The demographic dividend resulting from the large youth population, representing 60% of the CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa) zone, is an asset for the country. However, realizing the potential benefits of this demographic advantage comes with the challenge of addressing critical social needs, including education, healthcare, land access, and most importantly, creating employment opportunities for the burgeoning youth population.

⁹ The World Bank - World Development Indicators, 2023 - <https://data.worldbank.org/country/cameroon>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ UNDP annual report, 2019 - <https://annualreport.undp.org/2019/>

Effectively tackling the issues of youth underemployment and unemployment remains paramount to unlocking the full potential of Cameroon's demographic dividend and further improving the country's human development indicators.

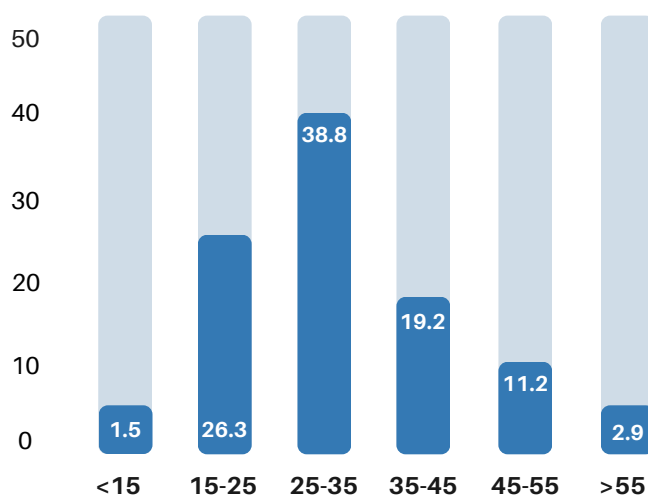
2.1.3 Labor market and economic landscape

Cameroon's business environment currently ranks 167th out of 190 economies in the "Doing Business" ranking, which presents challenges for formalization initiatives¹². The complex and costly administrative procedures in the country contribute to the growth of the informal sector, where entry is free and without associated costs.

In 2018, the size of the informal sector, as indicated by the increase in the unemployment rate, was 90.2%, encompassing all sector¹³, totaling around 10 million people, primarily engaged in agricultural and craft trades. This emphasizes that non-standard constitutes a significant portion Cameroon's of labor market activity and emphasizes the resilience of the informal sector compared to the formal sector.

At macroeconomic level, the informal sector in Cameroon represents more than 57% of the country's GDP¹⁴. At the microeconomic level, Cameroon has more than 2,500,000 Informal Production Units (IPUs) spread across the country. In terms of geographical distribution, rural areas account for 49.5% of these units, while metropolitan areas constitute 33.3% of IPUs¹⁵. In terms of their management, 54.4% of IPUs are managed by young workers and women, while men manage only 45.6%¹⁶.

Distribution of working people in the informal sector by age



¹² Doing Business - The World Bank, 2020 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/688761571934946384/pdf/Doing-Business-2020-Comparing-Business-Regulation-in-190-Economies.pdf>

¹³ ILOSTAT database, 2018 - <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

¹⁴ Elvis, N. T., Cheng, H., & Providence, B. I. (2022). The Illustrative Understanding on the Informal Sector and Its Influence in Firm Productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): Evidence from Cameroon

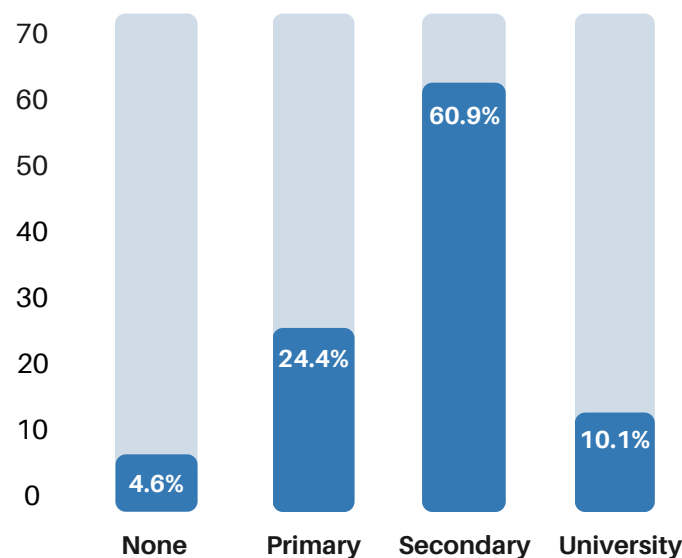
¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

A study on the urban informal sector in Cameroon (Elie Walter Mbeck, 2021), conducted through survey and interviews with informal sector workers, reveals that young people are the population with the highest representation in informal activities, representing 66.7%. Furthermore, the urban informal sector employs more women (55.3%) than men (44.7%)¹⁷.

Among these informal workers in the urban areas, 60.9% have a secondary education level, whereas only 10.1% have been to university and only 4.6% have no schooling.

Working people in the informal sector by education



In Cameroon, the National Institute of Statistics assesses the informal sector using three criteria: promoter independence (owner working on their own account), absence of administrative registration (no tax identification number), and informal accounting practices. Based on these criteria, it was estimated that Cameroon's informal economy constituted approximately 29.9% of the country's GDP at PPP levels¹⁸, equivalent to around \$31 billion¹⁹. This underscores the significant role played by the informal sector in Cameroon's economy.

The overgrowth of the informal sector in Cameroon can be attributed to several factors:

- Low productivity and deficiencies in economic governance.
- Challenges related to education and access to information.
- Limited productivity of formalization efforts and companies.
- Challenges in the Rule of Law

¹⁷ Evaluation of Resilience and Poverty Reduction: Case of Study of Employment in the Urban Informal Sector in Cameroon – Elie Walter Mbeck, 2021

¹⁸ Purchasing power parity (PPP) is a measure of the price of specific goods in different countries and is used to compare the absolute purchasing power of the countries' currencies.

¹⁹ Informal Economy Database – World Economic, 2018 – <https://www.worldeconomic.com/National-Statistics/Informal-Economy/Cameroon.aspx>

On the flip side, the informal sector has negative implications:

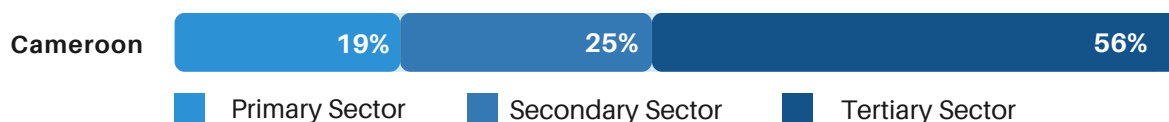
- Socially, it perpetuates poverty due to the low wages and precarious nature of the available jobs.
- Economically, it leads to a tax revenue shortfall for the government.
- It hinders overall economic competitiveness in international trade.

Despite these challenges, the informal sector is often seen as a haven for individuals struggling to integrate into the formal economy, benefiting from a degree of "administrative tolerance." Furthermore, the laxity, lack of transparency, and deficiencies in public service contribute to the persistence of a significant number of production units within the informal sector.

2.1.4 Key sectors of economy

In Cameroon, the economic activity is diversified across the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors, constituting 19%, 25%, and 56% respectively, making it one of the most diversified economies in the CEMAC region²⁰.

Diversification of economy by sectors (Int. Monetary fund - 2020)



Despite ample natural resources, the primary sector's contribution to GDP growth is limited, primarily driven by smallholder farmers cultivating food crops, accounting for about 1% annually²¹. This sector faces challenges including infrastructure deficits, limited access to financing, and a shortage of skilled labor crucial for advancing agriculture²².

The secondary sector's contribution to GDP growth is also modest, relying primarily on extractive industries and light manufacturing. The most significant contributor to GDP growth is the tertiary sector, driven by substantial public investments and relatively basic retail trade and food service activities. However, critical tertiary sectors such as information and communication technologies (ICT) remain underdeveloped, resulting in adverse effects. Cameroon ranked 123rd out of 141 countries on the 2019 Global Competitiveness Index²³, primarily due to deficiencies in infrastructure, low ICT adoption, and weak innovation capability.

²⁰ International Monetary Funds, 2022 - <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/OO2/2022/076/article-A003-en.xml>

²¹ The World bank, World Development Indicators (WDI), 2019. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/cameroon>

²² Country Strategy Report 2015- 2020 - African Development Bank Group, 2021

²³ World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Index Report, 2019.

Cameroon also grapples with various socioeconomic disparities between women and men. In terms of economic opportunities, women make up the majority in agriculture (49.3%, compared to 38.9% for males)²⁴, while men participate at higher rates in both industry and services²⁵. Although women are more involved in agriculture, their focus tends to be on food crops like maize, cassava, rice, and plantains, while men typically cultivate cash crops such as coffee and cocoa.

In summary, Cameroon's is a diversified economy across primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. Challenges persist in the primary sector, with limited growth driven by smallholder farmers. The tertiary sector leads in GDP growth, but critical areas like ICT need development. Gender disparities are evident, with women focused on food crops and men on cash crops and industry.

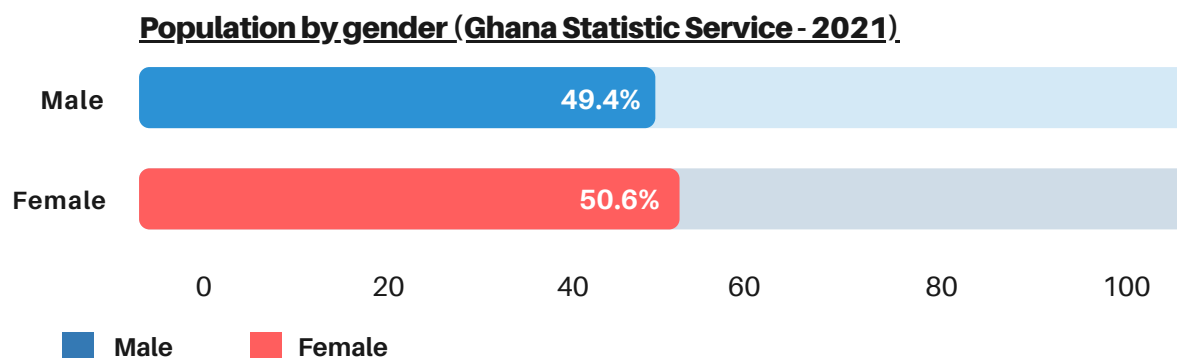
²⁴ World Development Indicators - The World Bank, 2019 - <https://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.3>

²⁵ Ibid.

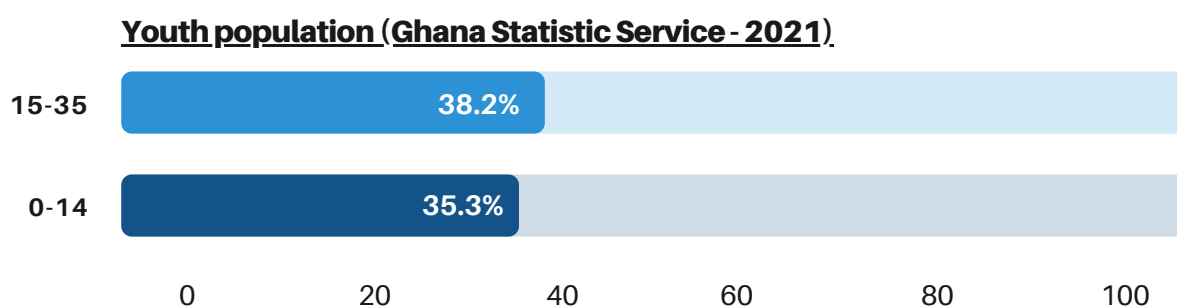
2.2 - Ghana

2.2.1 Population trends and demographics

In 2021, Ghana's total population stood at 30,832,019, marking a 25% increase since the last census, with an annual intercensal growth rate of 2.1%²⁶. A significant portion of the population resides in urban areas (56.7%), while the remainder lives in rural areas (43.3%).



In terms of gender distribution, there is an almost equal split between males and females. However, Ghana's population age structure is undergoing a transition, shifting from a dominance of children (0-14 years) to a majority of young people (15-35 years)²⁷. The proportion of children has decreased from 41.3% in 2000 to 35.3% in 2021, while that of young people has increased from 34.6% in 2000 to 38.2% in 2021²⁸.



The working-age population (15-64 years) constitutes a substantial 60.4% of the total, and it's worth noting that the population aged 0-15, which will soon enter the working-age category, accounts for 35.3% of the overall population²⁹.

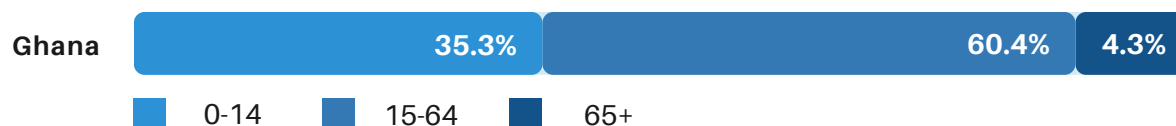
²⁶ Ghana 2021 Population and housing census Report - <https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/>

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

Working Age Population (Ghana Statistic Service - 2021)

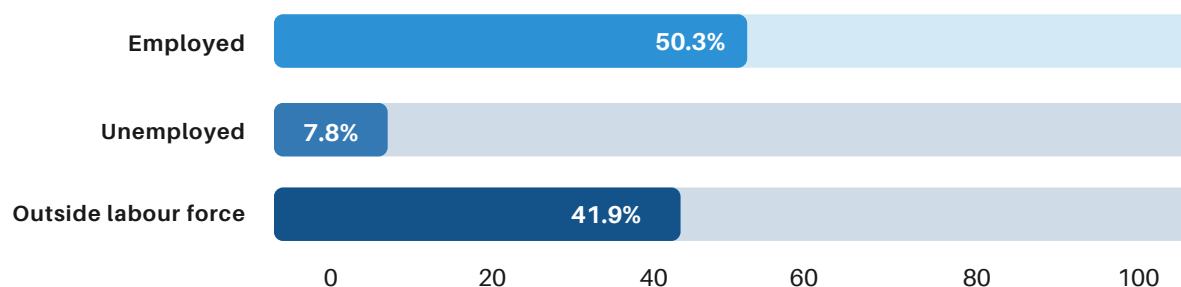


In conclusion, it is projected that the population of Ghana will continue to grow in the next few years, with a particular emphasis on the youth demographic. This perspective suggests that it is imperative to make sustained investments in the education and job sectors. Additionally, addressing skills gaps through vocational training and education that align with industry demands is of paramount importance for enhancing youth competitiveness in the job market.

2.2.2 Economics trends and youth unemployment

Ghana's economic landscape has shown negative growth in recent years, with a GDP growth slowed to 3.2% in 2022, down from 5.4% in 2021³⁰. The country has made significant strides in diversifying its economy, with various sectors like agriculture, services, and manufacturing contributing to a growth in recent years, before 2021.

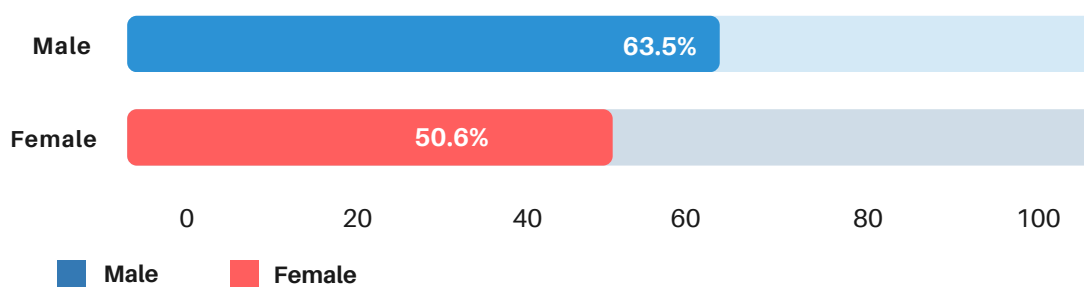
Population by economic activity (Ghana Statistic Service - 2021)



The labor force, encompassing the economically active population, totals 11,541,355 individuals, comprising 9,990,237 employed individuals and 1,551,118 unemployed individuals³¹. This represents 58.1 percent of the working population aged 15 years and older. The table below illustrates the workforce participation rate among individuals aged 15 and older, categorized by their economic activity status.

³⁰ The World Bank, Ghana overview 2023 – <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/overview>

Economically active person by sex (Ghana Statistic Service - 2021).



Regarding gender, males exhibit a significantly higher economic activity rate, standing at 63.5%, in contrast to their female counterparts at 50.6%.

Ghana employment to population ratio

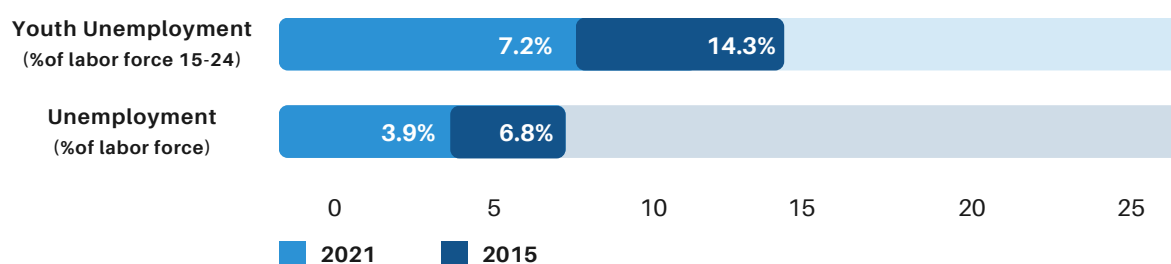
	2015	2021
YOUTH (%ages 15-24)	37.3	37.1
TOTAL (%ages 15 and older)	64.5	65.9

*<https://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.5#>

In 2021, Ghana's overall employment rate was around 65.9%. Among the youth population aged 15–24, the employment rate was 37.1% in 2021, down slightly from 2015³². These numbers suggest that overall employment in Ghana remained relatively stable over the six-year period, specifically for youth employment, indicating a generally steady employment situation in the country.

One critical concern that the nation continues to address is youth unemployment. Youth unemployment encompasses individuals aged 15 to 24 years who are without work but actively seeking employment opportunities.

Ghana Unemployment rates (ILO estimate).



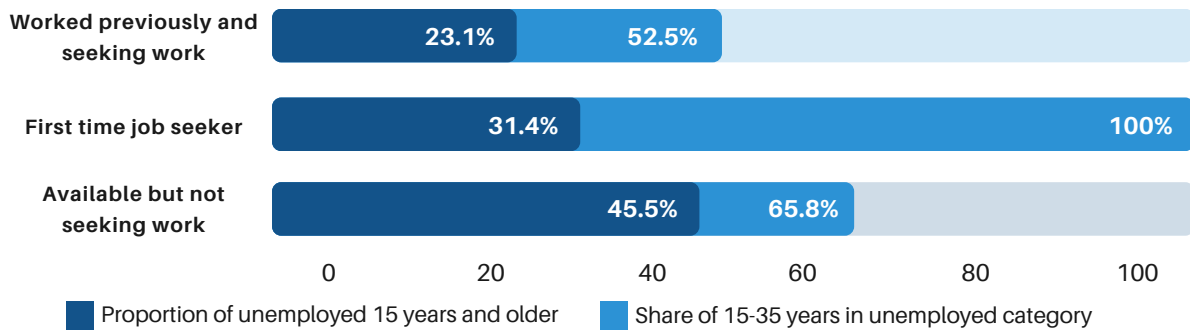
In 2021, Ghana experienced an encouraging decline in the youth unemployment rate, which dropped by 14.3 percentage points since 2015, until 7.2 percent in 2021³³. The decline in youth unemployment could be a positive sign, indicating that efforts to promote economic growth and entrepreneurship are yielding results. Despite progress, persistent youth unemployment calls for ongoing attention and targeted solutions.

³¹ Ghana 2021 Population and housing census Report – <https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/>

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Share of 15-35 years in unemployed category 15+ (Ghana Statistic Service - 2021)



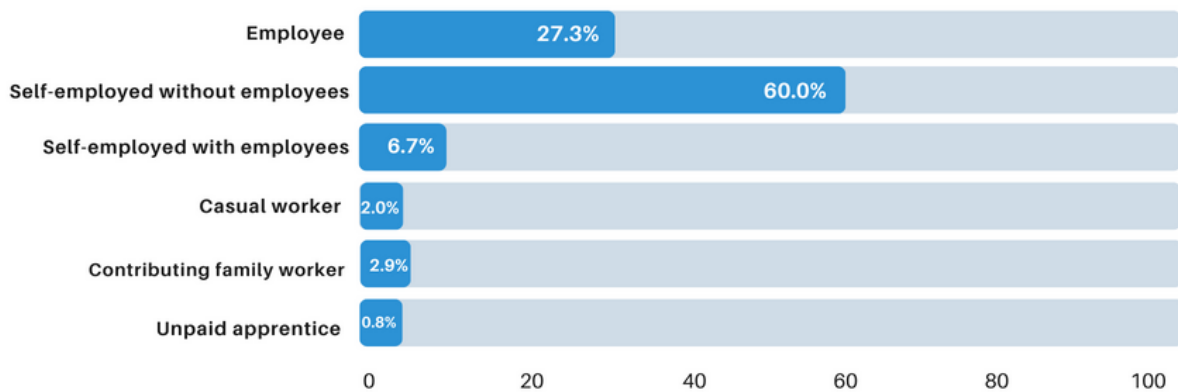
Among the unemployed population aged 15 years and older, 45.5% are available for employment but are not actively seeking work. Within this group, the youth aged 15–35 years account for two-thirds, amounting to 65.8%. The same applies to the first time job seekers and worked previously and seeking work groups where young people between 15–35 account for 100% and 52.5% respectively³⁴.

On the other hand, in 2021, Ghana reached a Human Development Index (HDI)³⁵ score of 0.63, indicating a medium level of development. Over the past two decades, the country has seen consistent progress, with the HDI on an upward trajectory since 2000. However, Ghana's HDI has consistently fallen within the medium-to-low range, highlighting the need for addressing challenges to raise it further. Despite notable advancements, there remain areas requiring attention.

2.2.3 Labor market and economic landscape

As previously observed, Ghana is one of the fastest-growing economies in West Africa, although it experienced a slight decline in the past year. On the other hand, the increasing population, particularly the youth, poses a challenge in making the job market more accessible and fostering its development.

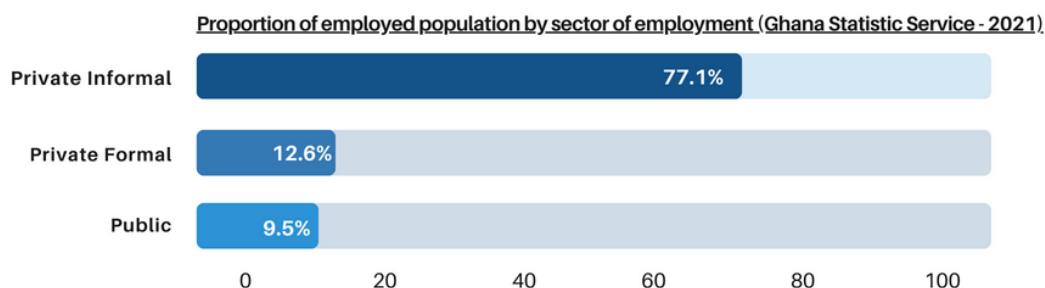
Employed population by status in employment (Ghana Statistic Service - 2021)



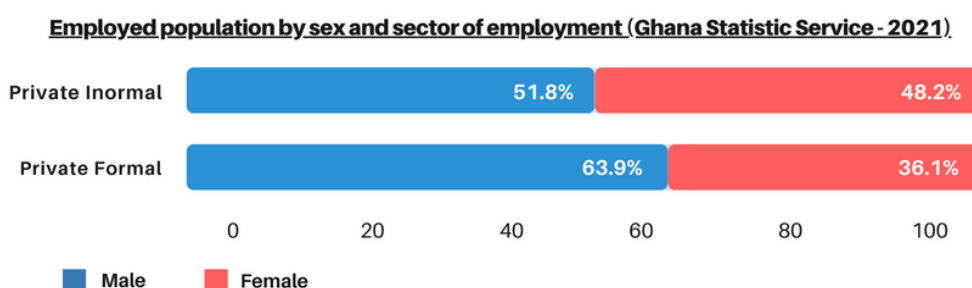
³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>

In the country's economic fabric, only 7% of employable individuals aged 15 and above are self-employed with employees, compared to 60% who work individually without employees³⁶.



The backbone of Ghana's economy lies in the informal sector, which accounts for a substantial 77% of the total workforce. This sector comprises a diverse range of economic activities, from small-scale agriculture to micro-entrepreneurship that engage a substantial number of self-employed individuals. In contrast, the formal sector represents a comparatively modest 12%, while the public sector employs around 9% of the workforce³⁷.



Turning our attention to gender dynamics within the labor market, it is noteworthy that the informal sector engages a significantly higher number of women compared to the formal sector. This reflects the vital role that women play in sustaining local economies through various informal enterprises. In terms of distribution, the informal sector demonstrates a near parity of men (52%) and women (48%)³⁸. Conversely, the formal and public sectors show a higher participation of men, reflecting a prevailing gender imbalance.

In Ghana, numerous factors contribute to the apparent size of the informal economy. A study by The World Bank (Ohnsorge, F., & Yu, S., 2022) identified nine key reasons that explain the prevalence of the informal economy.

³⁶ Ghana 2021 Population and housing census Report - <https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

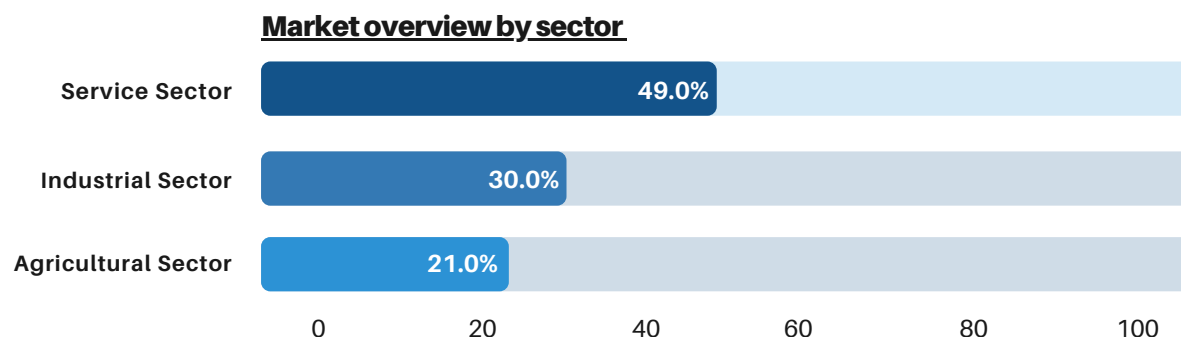
While some of these reasons align with findings from other countries, others have yet to be empirically tested. The factors identified include:

- Ineffective deterrent penalties.
- High returns associated with illegal and underground operations.
- Low confidence in the monetary system.
- A high level of illiteracy and skill deficits, particularly among farmers and small-scale operators, making bookkeeping challenging for them.
- Poverty: Individuals are sometimes driven to the informal economy out of necessity, not as a means to evade taxes.
- The labor-intensive nature of most informal economy activities and the utilization of relatively simple technologies, making the sector attractive in labor-intensive economies like that of Ghana.
- Minimal pursuit by the system: It is said that revenue agencies do not actively pursue the sector as they have yet to grasp its significant revenue potential.
- Limited capacity of the formal sector to provide employment, making the informal economy an appealing avenue for generating income for survival.
- Ease of entry and exit: Weak regulatory frameworks and low capital requirements allow people to transition in and out of the sector with ease.

To sum it up, Ghana's economy is growing, but there are still challenges, especially in creating enough jobs for everyone. The majority of employment opportunities are found in the informal sector, emphasizing the importance of supporting and formalizing small businesses to spur economic development.

2.2.4 Key sectors of economy

Ghana boasts a favorable business environment. In 2020, it ranked as the top country in West Africa for ease of business establishment. In 2022, Ghana anticipated the registration of over 18,000 new businesses (D.D. Sasu, 2023).



Ghana's economic landscape is characterized by a diversified sectoral contribution to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The services sector takes the lead, constituting a substantial 49% of the country's GDP in 2021³⁹. This impressive figure is attributed to notable advancements in crucial service industries such as education, health, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These sectors have not only bolstered economic growth but also underpinned vital aspects of societal development.

Following closely, the industrial sector plays a significant role, contributing 30% to the GDP⁴⁰. This sector encompasses a wide range of activities, from manufacturing to construction, which collectively contribute to Ghana's economic dynamism. Notably, the industrial sector serves as a key driver of innovation, employment, and infrastructural development.

The agricultural sector, while representing a slightly smaller portion at approximately 21% of GDP⁴¹, remains a cornerstone of Ghana's economy. This sector serves as the primary livelihood for a substantial 45% of the country's workforce, predominantly of small-scale landholders. Agriculture not only provides essential sustenance for the population but also forms a critical foundation for rural development and poverty alleviation efforts.

The agriculture and services sectors experienced slower growth in 2022 than the year before⁴². In line with its development goals⁴³, the government has implemented policies to promote business development and attract foreign investments, creating ample opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment.

³⁹ Ghana – Market Overview – International Trade Administration, 2022 – <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/ghana-market-overview#:~:text=The%20services%20sector%20is%20the.agricultural%20sector%20at%20roughly%2021%25.>

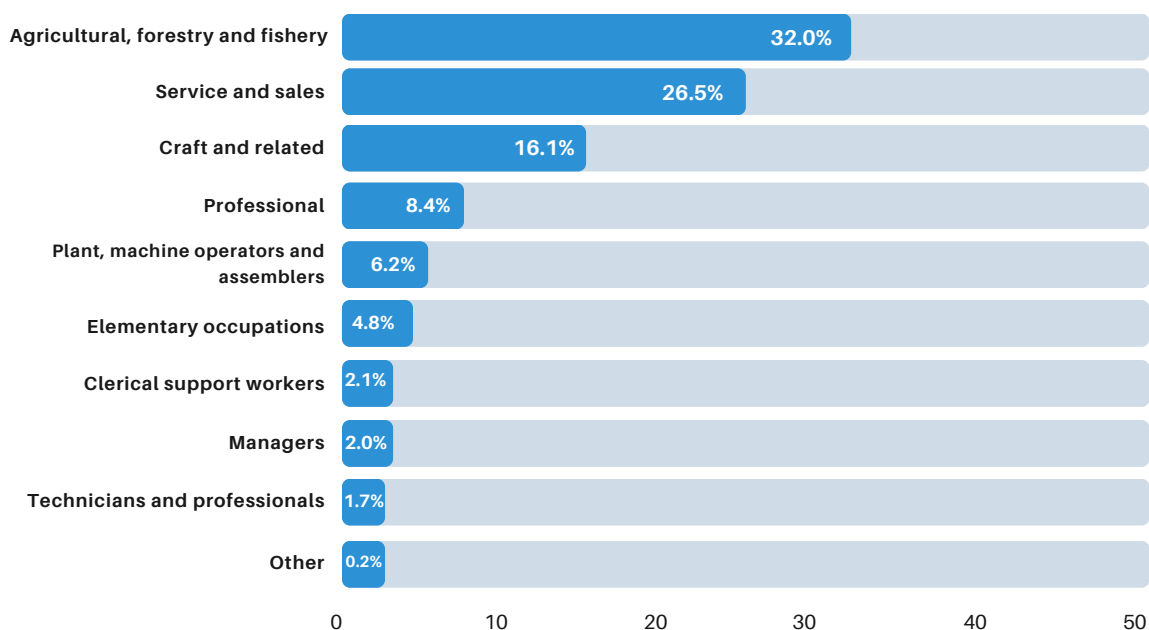
⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ghana Overview – The World Bank, 2022 – <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/overview>

⁴³ Ghana Growth & Development Agenda – <https://mfa.gov.gh/index.php/foreign-policy/growth-development-agenda/>

Employed population by occupation (Ghana Statistic Service - 2021).



In terms of occupation, a substantial portion of the employed population, aged 15 years and older, is involved in various sectors. This includes skilled roles in agricultural, forestry, and fishery activities, accounting for 32.0% of the workforce. Additionally, there is significant engagement in the services and sales sector, representing 26.5% of the workforce. Moreover, occupations related to crafts and their associated trades comprise 16.1% of the employed population⁴⁴. This diversified distribution of employment reflects the range of skills and expertise present within the workforce.

In summary, Ghana's economic vitality is underpinned by a diverse sectoral makeup. The services sector, driven by education, health, and ICT, stands as the linchpin of economic activity, followed closely by the industrious contributions of the industrial sector. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector, employing a significant portion of the population, remains a vital component of both the economy and livelihoods. Balancing growth across these sectors will be crucial in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development for Ghana in the years ahead.

⁴⁴ Ghana 2021 Population and housing census Report - <https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/>

Chapter 3 - Needs Assessment: Results from the questionnaires

In June 2023, an assessment was conducted in Ghana and Cameroon. The aim was to investigate the state of the art of the entrepreneurial ecosystem from different points of view, focusing on the needs of students and teachers, the educational offer of training centers concerning entrepreneurship and the private sector's requirements.

A questionnaire was distributed through the Google Form tool to the following categories of stakeholders:

1. Students
2. Teachers
3. VET Centers
4. Private Sector: Incubators & Hubs
5. Private Sector: Entrepreneurs

Below are the data collected through the assessment, broken down into different categories.

3.1 – Survey for students

3.1.1 – Participants' profile

This survey was submitted to VET schools' students in Ghana and Cameroon. The aim was to analyze the skills of students and the educational context concerning entrepreneurship, in order to identify areas for improvement.

Two surveys were submitted, one in English and one in French. It is worth mentioning that the English one was filled by students both in Ghana and Cameroon; however, given the overall similarity of the responses, it was decided to analyse the responses together as the limited number of answers from Cameroonian students do not influence the overall analysis.

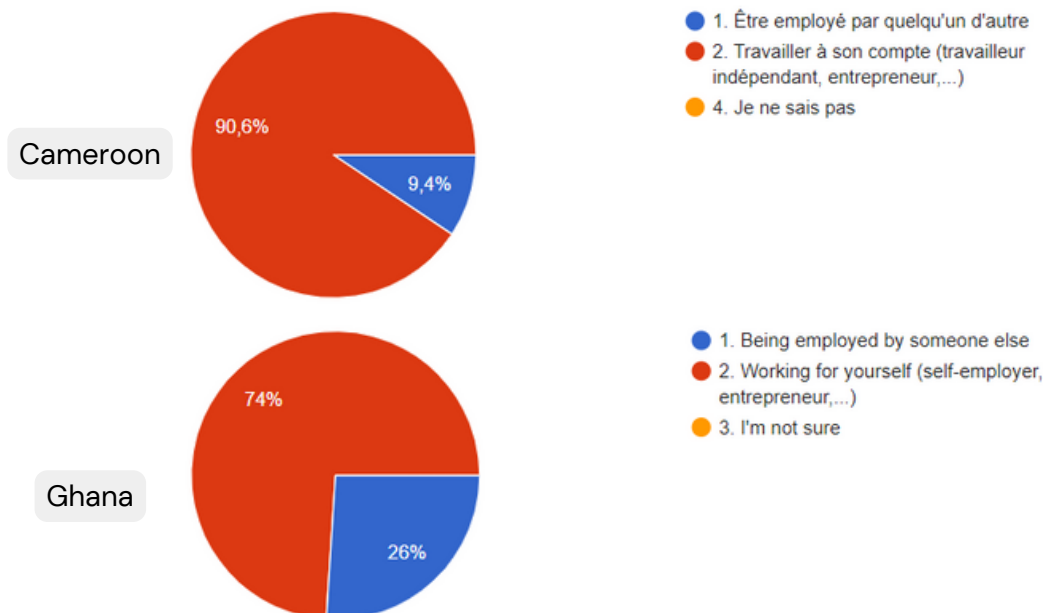
Number of respondents	
Respondents from Ghana	32
Respondents from Cameroon	52
Total Number of Respondents	84

Regarding the profile of the respondents, most of them were males, with an age range between 16–30 years old (mostly 21–25 years old). The participants from both countries come from a wide range of vocational training schools in Ghana and Cameroon. This allows one to have a broader look at the educational context.

- TVET schools in Ghana: *Don Bosco Technical Institute, Accra Technical University, Kpando Technical Institute, Tema Technical Institute, St. Daniel Comboni Technical Vocational Institute.*
- TVET schools in Cameroon: *Lycée Technique de Tayim, Institut Supérieur Polytechnique d'Afrique Centrale (ISPAC), Institut de Technologie de l'Industrie, du Management et de l'Entrepreneuriat (INTIME), Institut Universitaire de Technologie FOTSO Victor de Bandjoun (IUT-FV).*

3.1.2 – Analysis

« If you could choose, what type of employment would you prefer? »



The students' interest in the entrepreneurial world and the consequent learning of skills is clearly demonstrated by the answers above. In fact, as far as their future career is concerned, **most students in both countries would like to start their own business and become self-employed.**

To better understand the reasons for this response, they were asked to provide an explanation. The main reasons for the choice would be:

- Independence and personal satisfaction
- Implementation of a business idea
- Better revenue projections
- Freedom to choose place and working time

« Have you received any training or education related to entrepreneurship? »



A **positive finding** is that in both countries about 60% of respondents claimed to **have received training or education related to entrepreneurship**, indicating that these topics are already being addressed in schools and vocational training centres together with the main technical skills.

Specifically, in Ghana, students **received training on**: electrical engineering, automotive electronics, catering and hospitality, and business creation.

In Cameroon, on the other hand, students were trained on: livestock and agriculture, clothing design, electricity for construction, mechanical engineering.

In addition, **soft skills and notions related to business creation** (e.g. problem solving, work ethics, setting rules, creation of a business plan, risk management) were also addressed in both countries.

« Do you think your school/university currently provides the required tools and assessment to become an entrepreneur? »



However, especially in Cameroon, we can see that there is no unequivocal opinion among the students about the **provision of adequate and required tools**. In Ghana as well, around 40% disagree or cannot give an opinion on the above question. This could be an indicator for making the tools more accessible and suitable for the labour market, also according to the students' aspirations.

Subsequently, students were asked about the areas in which the students wished to receive training. The most common answers in the respective countries were:

Ghana

- Finance management and marketing
- Business set up
- Automotive engineering
- Electrical engineering
- Agriculture and dairy processing
- Graphic design

Cameroon

- Business creation and management
- Business innovation
- Project management
- Business finance
- Digital marketing
- Agriculture and livestock
- Haute couture training
- E-commerce
- Building electricity
- Technical drawing
- Welding
- Training in mechanical manufacturing

Besides technical competences related to specific works, **many students are interested in learning the soft skills related to business creation and management** (i.e, project management, business finance, business management).

« Have you ever started or been involved in a business activity? »



To further emphasize the importance that entrepreneurial education would have on students' futures, the question above shows that in both countries more than half of

the students **have already been engaged in a business activity** (mostly in a family business), highlighting once more their interest in this sector.

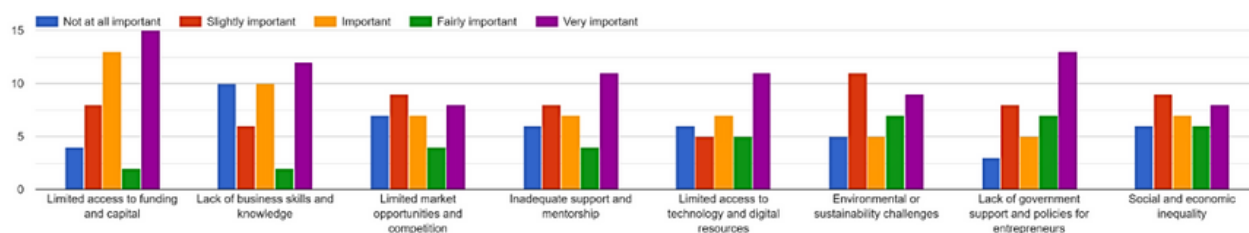
In addition, students were asked to rate their interest and opinion **regarding the presence of a staff to support students in the creation of their business plan ideas**.

This idea was perceived as most attractive and helpful in Cameroon, where 58% of the students thought it would be (very) helpful. In Ghana, the responses still showed **some uncertainty about this proposal**.

Lastly, students were asked about the **obstacles to becoming an entrepreneur at national level**.

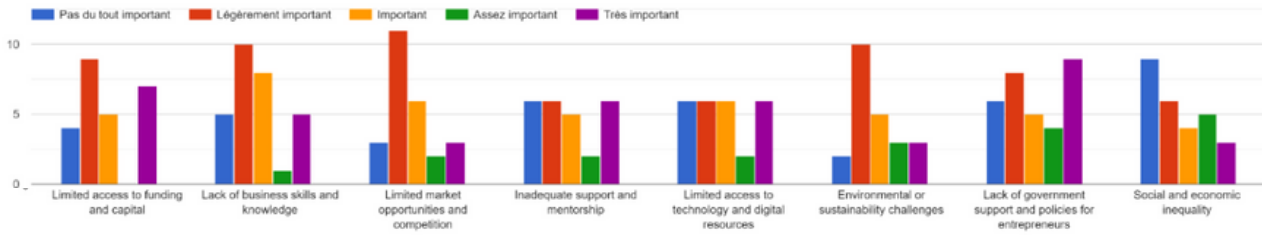
Given the different level of economic development and social obstacles, this is the answer that showed the most differences between the two Western African countries.

« Have you ever started or been involved in a business activity? »



Ghana

In Ghana, **all the suggested statements are perceived as important obstacles** to a business creation, especially the limited access to funding and the lack of government support, followed by lack of business skills, inadequate mentorship and limited access to digital resources. An interesting element is that the “lack of business skills and knowledge” is perceived as an obstacle by 12 respondents, however, 10 of them believe it is not important at all. This might be connected to the perception that the success of a business depends more on luck/ God providence and key relations than skills, as was mentioned in the focus groups conducted during the study visits in the 2 countries. Lastly, environmental sustainability is not perceived as an obstacle. This might also suggest that there is no awareness about the notion of environmental sustainability.



Cameroon

On the contrary, in Cameroon, most of the suggested obstacles to business creation are perceived as slightly important according to the respondents, especially, the lack of funds, limited market opportunities and the sustainability challenges. What is not seen as a challenge in any way are social and economic inequalities. This might also suggest low awareness on the concept of social and economic inequalities rather than this is not seen as a challenge.

3.2 – Survey for teachers

3.2.1 – Participants' profile

The objective of this survey aims to analyze the entrepreneurial skills of teachers/trainers and the training program of VET schools in Ghana and Cameroon. This survey will identify areas for improvement in the field of entrepreneurship and will support the creation of effective modules and training for students, teachers, and trainers in these countries.

Number of respondents	
Respondents from Ghana	36
Respondents from Cameroon	88
Total Number of Respondents	124

The teachers interviewed in Ghana are part of the school staff of three vocational training institute: *Don Bosco Technical Institute Odumase, Don Bosco Technical Institute in Ashaiman and Don Bosco Tech Tatale*. 84.5 % of the respondents are male and 75.6 % are aged between 20 and 40 years.

As for the teachers in Cameroon, the following training centres participated in the questionnaire: *Lycee Technique de Tayim, Lycee Technique de Bafoussam, Centre Professionnel Don Bosco Mimboman, IUTFV de Bandjoun, Intime, Cetic Bilingue De Badeng, Lycee Technique de Galim // CEPAB, CMPJ Regional and Groupe Scolaire Bilingue Lucioles*.

It is interesting to note some differences between the samples interviewed in the two countries. In fact, in Cameroon, 61% of the respondents' teachers are male and 39% female, while in Ghana the 85% are male and only the 15% females. Above all, there is a significant difference in the level of education of the teachers. In Ghana it turns out that **36.6% of the respondents have a Bachelor's degree** while **29.3% have a Vocational/Technical education certificate**. While in Cameroon, **56.1% of teachers have a Vocational/Technical education certificate**, 13.4% a secondary school diploma and only **6.1% a bachelor's degree**.

3.2.2 – Analysis

In Ghana, only 45 % of the respondents stated that multidisciplinary activities related to entrepreneurship are implemented in the school.

Such as: **entrepreneurship training** for trainers and trainees in the cosmetology, hospitality and catering, automotive, electricity and air-conditioning sectors; **introduction to soft skills**; **JSO**; **student-centered approach**. While in Cameroon, 57.3% of teachers say that multidisciplinary activities related to entrepreneurship are implemented in their schools. Examples include: **end-of-year project** on incubators, company visits, internship, teaching the entrepreneurship module, product sales and showrooms and marketing.

A relevant data concerns teacher training, in both Cameroon (52,5%) and Ghana (58,5%), **more than half of the teachers have never received any formal training or education in entrepreneurship**. Furthermore, in Ghana, 47.5% of teachers have never attended an entrepreneurship training, workshop or seminars and in Cameroon, 44.2% of teachers have never attended this type of formation, 15,6% rarely but 18.2% have participated several times.

The number of employees working as mentors in the field of entrepreneurship in schools in both Ghana and Cameroon is between one employee and three. In Ghana, 52.5% of the teachers interviewed stated that no training in innovation & entrepreneurship is currently active in the centers. Only 32.5% say they do, and most of these training are on renewable energy technologies. Even in Cameroon, the percentage of teachers answering affirmatively is low (39.2%). Only in a few Cameroonian training centers, there are entrepreneurship and e-learning courses.

Regarding teachers' skills, in Ghana, **31.7% of respondents rated their entrepreneurial skills ok**, 22% good, 9.8% very good and **36.6% poor or very poor**. In Cameroon, 26.3% of the teachers rated their entrepreneurial skills ok, 13.8% good, 17.5% very good and **42.5% poor or very poor**. Regarding the entrepreneurial skills that teachers believe they possess, the most reported for both the countries are: **leadership, planning and organization** and **communication**. While in Ghana only 48.8% of the respondents had their own business, in Cameroon 68.8% answered in the affirmative.

As for the barriers encountered in accessing entrepreneurial education and training opportunities, the major difficulties encountered for both countries are as follows:

- **lack of funding**
- **limited accessibility to training programs in the sector**
- **lack of information and awareness**

Both in Ghana and in Cameroon, according to teachers, the most important methodologies and training to help students overcome these difficulties and to learn entrepreneurial skills are: **practical workshop, practical hands-on project, mentoring programs** and **case studies of successful companies**.

It is often difficult to implement these activities due to: **lack of funding, insufficient resources and materials**. In both countries, in order to improve their entrepreneurial skills and better incorporate them into their teaching, teacher would need:

- **training workshop for developing entrepreneurial skills**
- **funding or financial resources**
- **business development resources** (e.g. planning models, market research)

Lastly, in both Ghana and Cameroon, more than 90% of teachers would like to be engaged in a training program in entrepreneurship.

A methodological note: in this case, given the limited percentage of responses from Cameroonian teachers to the English questionnaire, it was decided to consider the English questionnaire representative of Ghana.

3.3 – Survey for VET Centers

3.3.1 – Participants’ profile

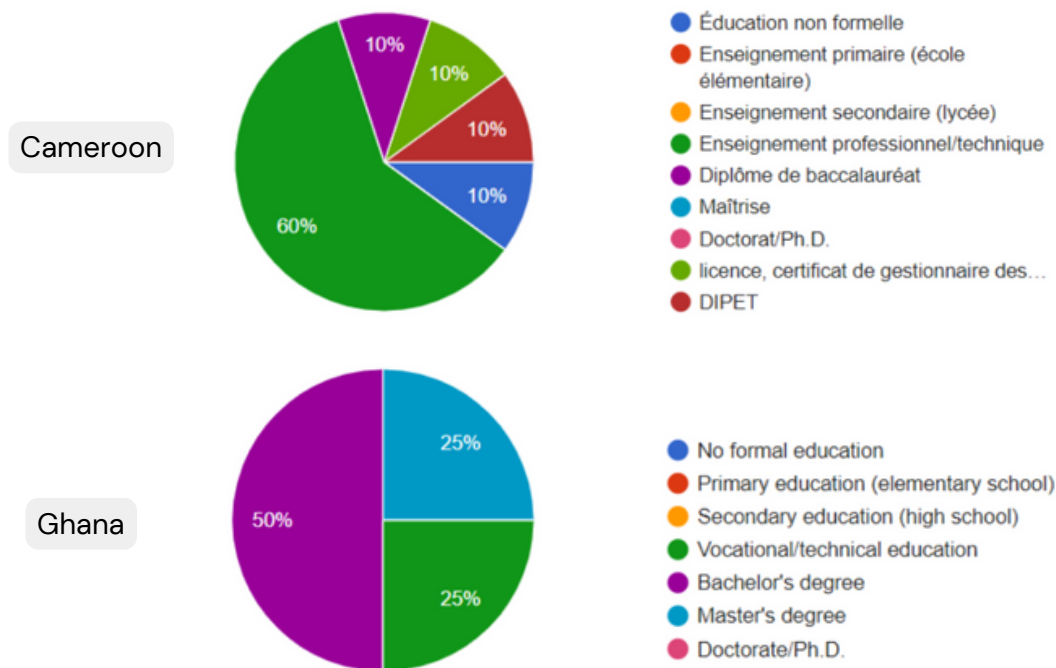
The objective of this survey aims to obtain valuable information to analyse entrepreneurial ecosystems and to identify areas of improvement and challenges faced by VET schools in Ghana and Cameroon. The survey is aimed at the VET centres (coordinators of the sectors, directors, departmental heads, JSO, etc.) to evaluate their role in their regional entrepreneurial ecosystem and the services they provide.

Number of respondents	
Respondents from Ghana	3
Respondents from Cameroon	11
Total Number of Respondents	14

The VET Centers involved in the assessment in Ghana are the following: Don Bosco Technical Institute Odumase, Don Bosco Technical Institute in Ashaiman and Don Bosco Tech Tatale.

Regarding VET Centres in Cameroon, those involved in the assessment are: *Lycee Technique de Bafoussam, Lycee Technique de Tayim, Cetic Bilingue De Badeng, Centre Professionnel Don Bosco Mimboman, Lycee Technique de Galim, CMPJ Regional, LT Bameka and Centre de formation professionnelle serec international.*

Regarding the profile of the respondents, in Ghana, 100% of the respondents were male, while in Cameroon, 60% of the respondents were male and 40% female. In Ghana, concerning data on the educational level of school staff, it turns out that **50% of the respondents have a Bachelor's degree, 25% have a Vocational/Technical education certificate and 25% have a Master degree.** The respondents also state that 75% of them have between 1- and 5-years’ work experience and 25% have more than 10 years' experience in the field. In Cameroon, **60% of the respondents have a Vocational/Technical education certificate, 10% informal education, 10% DIPET, 10% EFTP manager certificate and 10% Bachelor's degree.** Again, a marked difference in the degree of education between Ghana and Cameroon is evident. The respondents also state that 50% have more than 10 years' experience in the field, 40% between 1- and 5-years’ work experience and 10% have between 5- and 10-years’ work experience. The graphs below show a significant difference in the degree of education of the staff of the VET centers.



3.3.2 – Analysis

Both in Ghana and Cameroon, **more than ten teachers** involved in the **assessment work in the VET centers** and 50%–60% of the respondents stated that in their center there is **a unit in charge of entrepreneurship and/or innovation**. Despite this, however, in Ghana there are not active training courses in entrepreneurship, while in Cameroon, **60% of the respondents confirm the presence of active training courses in entrepreneurship**.

In both countries, VET centers collaborate with companies within the training provided to students: the majority are companies in the secondary sector (specially manufacturing) and in the tertiary sector (services). In Cameroon, VET centers also collaborate with companies in the field of mechatronics and automotive maintenance.

The average number of students doing an apprenticeship or traineeship in companies or enterprises in the last year is **more than thirty students per center** in both countries. However, it is important to point out that in **all VET centers in Ghana, the Job Service Office is active**, whereas in Cameroon, **70% of the respondents stated that the JSO is not active in their centers**. As for the employment rate of students after education, the data show better results for Cameroon: 55.5% of respondents stated that between **30% and 50% of students at the centers find a job after their studies**. In Ghana, most respondents stated that **only more than 10% of students are employed** after their studies and **less than 10% start their own business** (the same figure was observed in Cameroon).

According to respondents from both countries, the best ways to bring vocational training institutions, graduates and companies together to improve the chances of student success are as follows:

- **Job Service Office**
- **Establishing partnerships with businesses**
- **Employment Office**
- **Internship**

Finally, in both Ghana and Cameroon, according to the interviewees, the school does not sufficiently facilitate access to public/private funding for its potential entrepreneurs.

A methodological note: in this case, given the limited percentage of responses from Cameroonian VET centers to the English questionnaire, it was decided to consider the English questionnaire representative of Ghana.

3.4 – Survey for Incubators

3.4.1 – Participants' profile

The aim of the survey was to analyse the role of regional or national incubators/hubs in the entrepreneurial ecosystems of Ghana and Cameroon.

The survey serves to understand the mismatch, in terms of skills and competences, between the educational approach and labour market needs in these African countries. It also aims at identifying ways to support young entrepreneurs, the challenges they face in connecting with the creation of their own business, and the types of measures and approaches that can be used.

Number of respondents	
Respondents from Ghana	12
Respondents from Cameroon	3
<i>Total Number of Respondents</i>	15

Regarding the profile of the respondents, in Ghana the majority of the respondents were male (with the exception of 3 women) all aged between 31 and 40 years old. In Cameroon, out of 3 respondents, 2 were aged between 41 and 50 and one between 20 and 30. Regarding educational background, in Ghana, out of 12 respondents, 7 are bachelor or master graduates, while in Cameroon, most respondents come from VET schools or high schools.

Lastly, in order to have a broader profile of the respondents, they were asked in which type of business they were involved..

Ghana

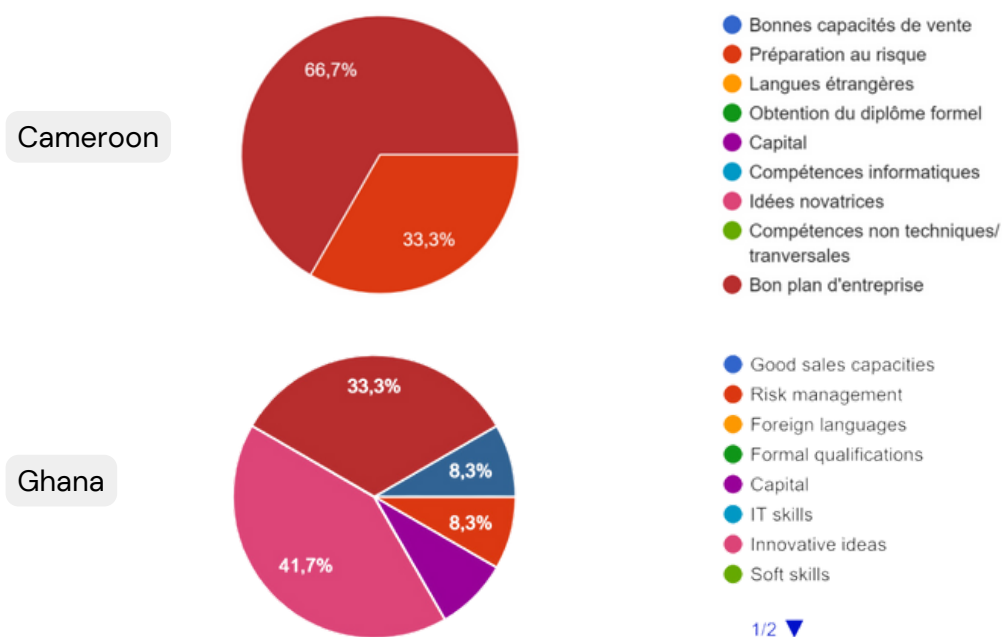
- TVET Consultancy
- Human Centered Design and Creative Entrepreneurship Agency
- Money Lending
- Farming Business
- Footwear manufacturing company
- Private consulting on enterprise development and MSME development
- Digital marketing and tech solutions agency

Cameroon

- Renovation and construction equipment company
- Association for the promotion of entrepreneurship

3.4.2 – Analysis

« What should an entrepreneur be aware of, have, or be able to do in order to be a successful entrepreneur? »



In order to understand which **soft skills should be taught in schools** to facilitate the adoption of an entrepreneurial attitude, respondents were asked to choose among a list of competences. In both countries, having a good business plan is considered very important. While innovative ideas are valued in Ghana, risk assessment is in Cameroon.

Furthermore, respondents were asked to give their opinion on the **educational subjects considered important for entrepreneurship**. In this case, given the difference in the number of responses, it is difficult to compare the two surveys. However, most people agree on financial **management**. We can also highlight: **law, (digital) marketing and leadership**.

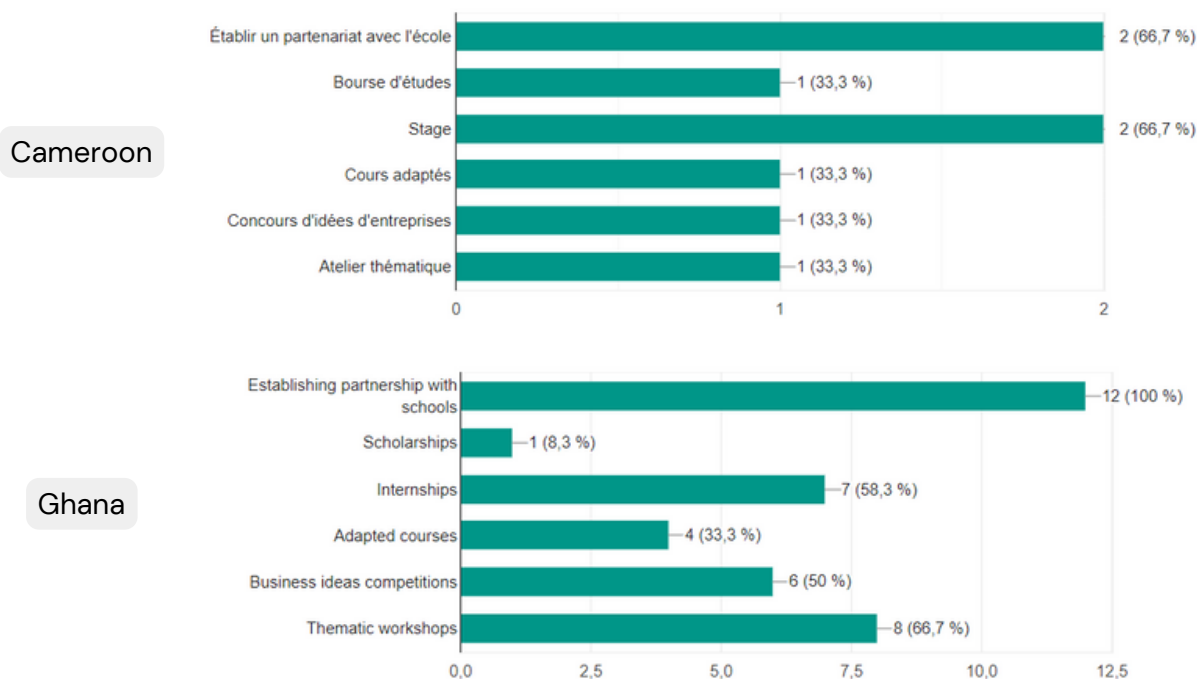
Consequently, it became important to understand how these **technical and transversal skills should be taught to students**. This question resulted in very different answers between the two countries.

Indeed, Ghanaian experts believe that the best learning methods are **mentorships** (91.7% agreed on that), **focused workshops**, followed by the learning by doing approach and meetings with role models.

In Cameroon, on the other hand, **focused workshops** and **meetings with role models** are considered the most effective, while the other answers received only one vote (and mentorship gained the 0% of preferences).

To comprehend **whether there is interaction and collaboration between the VET environment and national incubators**, the respondents were asked if they had ever collaborated with a VET institution. Most Ghanaian respondents (58%) had not collaborated with a vocational training institution; while in Cameroon out of 3 respondents, 2 had done so.

« How can TVET institutions and graduates better connect with incubators (mentors/coaches) like you to improve their competences? »



To determine **how this cooperation could be improved and consolidated**, respondents were asked to give their opinion on this issue. In the two countries, the **establishment of partnerships with schools and internships** are considered the most effective methods, followed by thematic workshops in Ghana.

Lastly, it is important to understand which are **the obstacles at national level** that could hinder a business creation. In Ghana the **lack of funding** is considered to be the main reason for that, followed by **tax burdens** and **complexity of administrative procedures**. In Cameroon, the 3 respondents gave equal importance to most answers, namely: **lack of funding, uncertainty of risk, complexity of administrative procedures, and lack of information**.

3.5 – Survey for Incubators

3.5.1 – Participants' profile

The objective of this survey aims to analyze the role of regional or national companies and/or entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurial ecosystems of Ghana and Cameroon.

The survey tries to understand the mismatch between the educational approach and labour market needs in these African countries. It also aims at identifying ways to support young entrepreneurs, the challenges they face in connecting with the educational system in these countries, and the types of approach that can be used.

Number of respondents	
Respondents from Ghana	30
Respondents from Cameroon	13
Total Number of Respondents	43

Regarding the profile of the respondents, in Ghana, the majority of the respondents were female (17), with a wide age range (from 20 to 50 years old). In Cameroon, all respondents were male, with the majority ranging between 31–40 years old.

Regarding educational background, in Ghana, most respondents (20) possess a bachelor or master degree; while in Cameroon, 7 of them come from VET schools and high schools.

In order to have a broader profile of the respondents, they were asked which job position they hold and in which type of business they are involved in.

In Ghana, most of the entrepreneurs are involved in SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) and in start-ups, holding the role of:

- Owner/Founder
- Director
- Consultant
- Risk Managed
- Manager
- Business developer

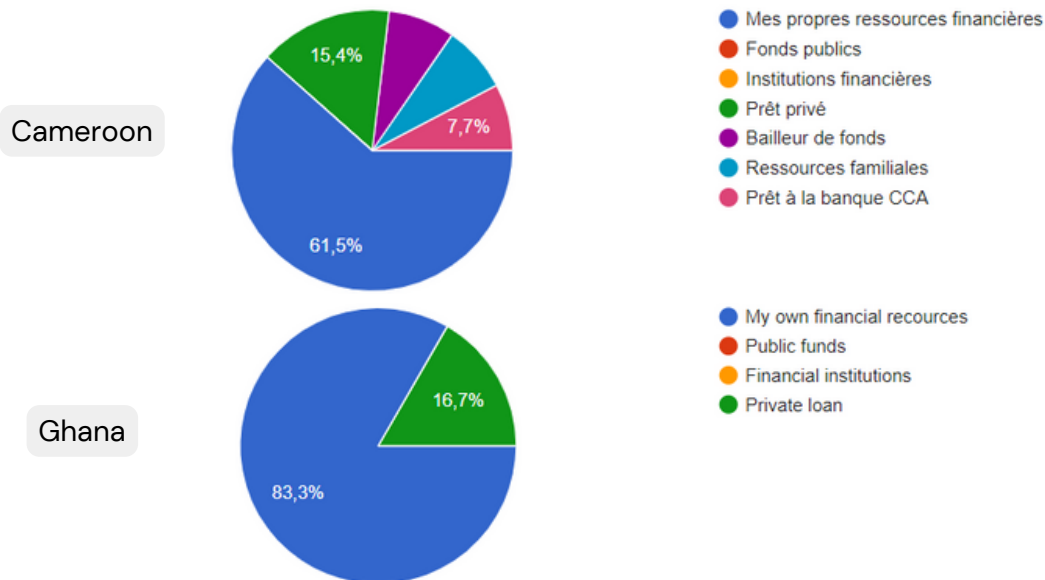
In Cameroon, most of the entrepreneurs are involved in private companies, holding the role of:

- Executive secretary
- Director/ Managing Director
- Head of company
- Educator

3.5.2 – Analysis

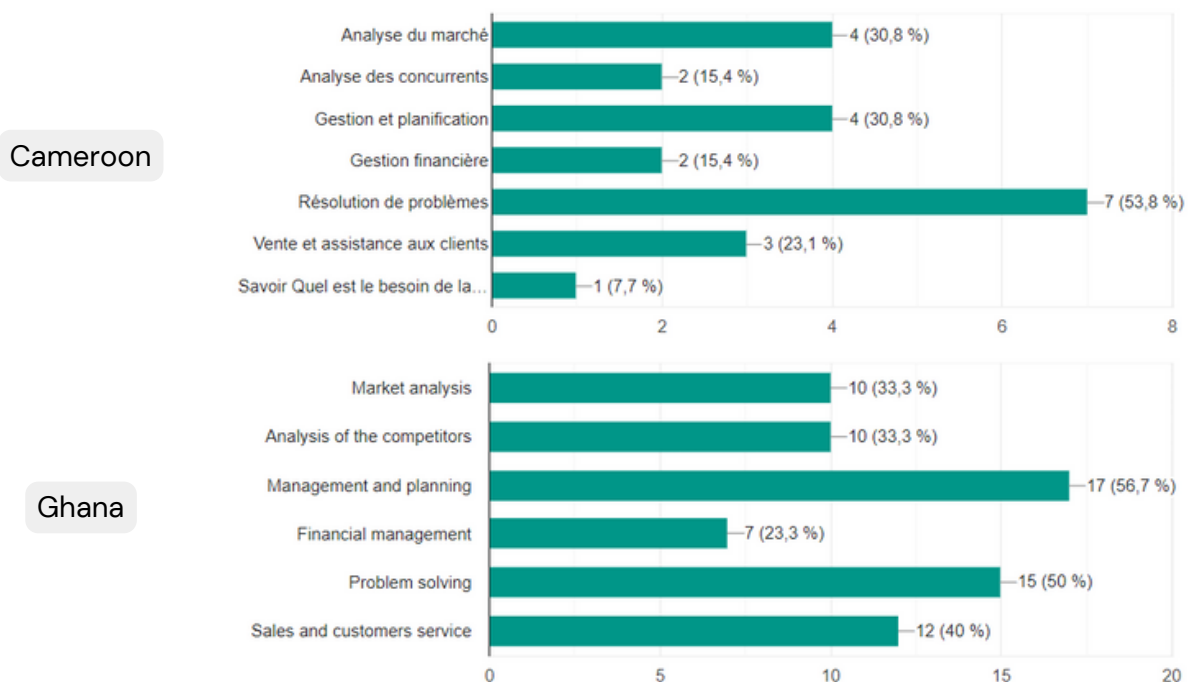
The first question to entrepreneurs was **why they had decided to start or get involved in their businesses**. Overall, the main reasons in both countries were the personal self-realization, the transformation of personal interests in business, the lack of opportunity in the labour market, and the possibility to earn more money.

« In economic terms, what kind of support did you receive to start your business? »



The survey also wanted to learn **what financial resources entrepreneurs used when starting their activity**. In both Western African countries, most people used their own financial resources while a small portion of respondents used private loans and bank loans (the latter in Cameroon only).

« In terms of skills and competencies, which ones have been useful for starting your business? »



With a view to improving and introducing entrepreneurial training courses, it was needed to understand which **skills were considered useful to entrepreneurs when they started their career**. Regarding this topic, we can observe a wide range of responses: from management and planning and problem solving, to the analyses of the market and of competitors.

With regard to past and ongoing **partnerships between businesses and VET centers**, the two countries provided dissimilar responses. In Ghana, more than 90% of respondents have never collaborated with VET centers or graduates. In Cameroon, on the other hand, almost 60% of entrepreneurs have had contact with vocational training centers and have welcomed/are welcoming trainees into their companies.

Lastly, the entrepreneurs were asked about the **national challenges hindering the creation of entrepreneurial realities**. For both countries, the first obstacle is the lack of funds. Ghanaian entrepreneurs also reported financing costs, unfavorable economic conditions and tax burdens; while the Cameroonian ones highlighted tax burdens, complex administrative procedures and lack of information.

3.6 –Conclusion

The analysis of the surveys in the two countries has brought some conclusions, which will help to tailor the next steps of the Smart Step project as well.

The data collected shows how the project addresses a real and current issue within VET institutions in Cameroon and Ghana: to develop entrepreneurial training modules targeting VET staff and students is needed. Most students in both countries are very interested in the topic of entrepreneurship and, in fact, most of them would like to **start their own business and become self-employed after completing school.**

From their side, VET institutes are already providing training related to entrepreneurship; however, especially in Cameroon, there is no unequivocal opinion among the students about the **provision of adequate tools.** This could be an indicator for making the tools more accessible and suitable for the labour market, also according to the students' aspirations. The latter is also confirmed by the fact that half of the teachers interviewed have **never received any formal training or education in the entrepreneurial field.** On the contrary, they assess their knowledge of such skills as poor and are conscious that they need to expand their knowledge to meet the needs of the students.

In the surveys, it was asked which skills and subjects are considered the most important to facilitate the entry into the labour market. Both students and entrepreneurs agree on the **importance of soft skills**, such as teamwork, work ethic, and problem solving; while the key technical subjects seem to be: project and financial management, business creation and innovation, labour market and competitors' analyses. Besides theoretical lectures, practical workshops and hands-on projects, **mentoring programmes and case studies of successful companies are considered the best ways to learn these skills.** However, it was argued that it is often difficult to implement such activities due to insufficient funding, and lack of resources and materials.

One difference that emerged between the two countries is the **involvement of businesses and companies in VET institutes.** A strong link between the two realities seems to exist only in Cameroon, with former students hosting apprentices in their workplace. This collaboration is crucial for the students' training, as internships are the first opportunity for them to get to know the labour world and to improve their technical and transversal skills.

Another difference concerns the presence of the **Job Service Office (JSO)** within the schools, which in Cameroon is not operating. On the contrary, the work of the JSO in Ghana can be considered a success, as it acts as a bridge between the students and the labour market, also assisting them in choosing a suitable career path.

In this way, the Smart Step project will serve to **exchange the above-mentioned good practices**, by establishing a system of exchange of learning processes and activities between the partners.

Lastly, **national economic conditions pose some obstacles to business creation**. In particular, in Ghana there is a lack of government support, a high tax burden and unfavorable economic conditions. Meanwhile in Cameroon, the biggest obstacles seem to be complex administrative procedures and lack of information.

Chapter 4 - The study visits in Ghana and Cameroon

4.1 – General overview

To further the depth of this research, study visits were conducted in Ghana and Cameroon by a team of experts from the project partners in April and June 2023. The experts' team included project managers, TVET center directors, professors on entrepreneurship, SME representatives and entrepreneurs. Experts were drawn from Ghana, Cameroon, Italy, Spain, Belgium. The multifaceted nature of the team contributed to deepen the analysis, by providing different points of view and perspectives.

Here below a table summarizing the total number of experts per organization and country:

Country	Ghana	Cameroon	Italy	Spain	Belgium
Organization	DBYN, SSC	INTIME, Don BOSCO Mimboman	VIS	MUNDUS, IDEAS-UPV	CEA-PME
Experts	5	5	2	6	4

The objectives of the study visits were:

- 1 To identify the mismatch between educational system and labour market needs and to develop a strategy to retool TVET institutions in Africa to be responsive to the signals and demands coming from the labour market.
- 2 To seek out ways to learn about the state-of-the-art of entrepreneurship in Ghana and Cameroon, analyzing the challenges and identifying good practices of TVET education.

The information gathered will support the development of SmartStep capacity building activities.

The study visit aimed to achieve these objectives by facilitating interactions and exchanges among participants, and by utilizing participatory approaches that encouraged active involvement in the decision-making process and fostered a sense of ownership.

The key players interviewed were TVET students, teachers and coordinators, young and experienced entrepreneurs, incubators, artisans, apprentices, and unemployed youth. The institutions visited in Ghana were Don Bosco Technical Institute (DBTI) in Ashaiman (Tema), the Ghana Innovation Hub in Accra and SSC Headquarters in Kumasi while the ones visited in Cameroon were INTIME in Bafoussam, Tayim Technical High School, CEPAB – Centre of promotion of artisans of Bafoussam and Mimboman Don Bosco in Yaounde.

Here below a table summarizing the category, institute, number of the respondents and the methodology used:

Category	Institute	Number of participants	Methodology
Students and former students	DBTI Ashaiman, Ghana	20	Focus Group
Coordinators and teachers	DBTI Ashaiman, Ghana	10	Focus Group
Entrepreneurs	MDF Innovation Hub, Accra Innovation Center, Ghana	9	Focus Group
Multi-stakeholders	MDF Innovation Hub, Accra, Ghana	22	Focus Group
Start-ups entrepreneurs	SSC headquarters, Kumasi, Ghana	5	Presentation and Q&A
Incubators, entrepreneurs and cooperatives	Kumasi, Ghana	18	Focus Group
Artisans, apprentices, and unemployed youth	Kumasi, Ghana	15	Focus Group
Students and former students	INTIME, Bafoussam, Cameroon	35	Focus Group
Coordinators and trainers	INTIME, Bafoussam, Cameroon	20	Focus Group
Unemployed youth and young entrepreneurs	INTIME, Bafoussam, Cameroon	25	Focus Group
Students	Don Bosco Mimboman, Yaoundé, Cameroon	40	Round-table

To have a more comprehensive overview, meetings with local authorities and other public institutions involved in entrepreneurship and professional education (such as the CFCE - Centre de Formalités de Création d'Entreprises and the FNE - Fonds National de l'Emploi) were also part of the program.

4.2 – The study visit in Ghana

It was observed that the **Don Bosco Technical Institute** is very well equipped with quality infrastructure and equipment; the courses and classes offer good practical skills in different sectors such as automobile, cosmetology, refrigeration, catering and hospitality, and renewable energies; the training curricula are well-designed and adapted to the needs of the learners and the surrounding communities. There is a good administrative and accounting organization, together with an adequate academic structure. The teachers show a good knowledge of their field.

Through focus groups with TVET students and former students, with TVET coordinators and teachers and MDF entrepreneurs, the following challenges have been identified:

- The duration of both DBTI training and internship were reported as too short to teach the basics of a job and gain sufficient experience of different aspects (hard skills, safety, attitude, familiarity with the tools) for being officially hired in the firm.
- Students in TVET institutions do not acquire the basic skills on how to set up their own business, even when they have already acquired the skills to build and construct their own products.
- Students lack an entrepreneurial mindset: they are not aware of the building blocks that constitute an entrepreneur of success, which can be identified as a set of good qualities and competencies that guide them to become successful in the entrepreneurial field.
- Students lack information: they are not aware of how to get infrastructures, facilities and how to maintain them, marketing and trade with other countries of Africa apart locally, and where to find a location to install their own shop.
- The financial aspect was identified as the most prominent challenge for those who want to start their own business. In fact, access to credit became increasingly difficult due to inflation and extremely high interest rates (around 38%) that make it not advisable to borrow money from a financial institution.
- The long and frustrating business registration processes, still dependent on political sponsorship despite the improvement brought upon by digitalisation.
- Some of the people working in a specific field observe that the labor market misses well-skilled workers, especially in specific sectors that may require specific skills and knowledge.
- Macroeconomic factors, such as a strong international competition which makes Ghana a net importer, high cost of capital and interest rates, dramatically high inflation (60%+ in April 2023) need to be considered as well.

The Ghana Innovation Hub is very efficient in supporting the development of innovations in many areas: technical, technological, digital, etc. There is a good organisation in terms of technical pathways and facilitation for the innovators selected and staying in the centre. There is easy access to information and technical/technological support, a good research framework, modern support tools and a good strategy.

However, the following need was identified:

- The support for the setup and management of companies should be put in place. Innovators should be supported in carrying out a market study to analyse the needs of communities in relation to innovations.

The meetings with all the stakeholders involved have led to the following recommendations:

- More efforts should be put into teaching entrepreneurship to enhance the orientation of students toward self-employment. To achieve this, organizing training for the teachers on entrepreneurial pedagogy⁴⁵ is key.
- Students should be provided with financial (e.g., book-keeping) and life soft skills (e.g., building self-confidence, good communication, etc.). It seems that the strict education, also from a religious perspective, makes it difficult for many children and adults to think outside the box and stand for their ideas with confidence and determination.
- Competence-based teaching methods, support hybrid teaching (in presence and online, but also theoretical and practical) and present role models and successful stories as inspiration for the students need to be fostered.
- The strengthening of public-private partnerships can enhance the placement of trainees in companies for either attachment or being hired.
- Young entrepreneurs in Ghana need to be supported on three different levels: within the TVET schools through the set-up of incubators and coaching mechanism to support students in developing and realize business ideas, by the government through legislative instruments to secure and sustain businesses and shorter procedures to register new firms, by financial institutions to establish flexible financial services and loans to facilitate the start-up through the access to equipment and raw-material.

⁴⁵ Entrepreneurial pedagogy is a technique that allows knowledge to be transmitted effectively through the 4 P's of the teacher's posture as a learning facilitator: Permission, Power, Protection, and Pleasure. It reconciles knowledge, being and know-how and places the learner at the centre of the learning process as the master.

- Setting up learning platforms with new skills and innovative technology providing entrepreneurs the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively sustain their enterprises in the fast-changing business environment is desirable.
- Advocating for opportunities for women in TVET and the benefits that women bring in firms, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors, is crucial.
- In order to contrast the phenomenon of tax evasion associated with informal businesses, specific microcredit initiatives could be more appropriate for new entrepreneurs together with the creation of standards and certifications for professions to speed up the transition from informality to formality.

The study visit revealed that Ghana's environment is not conducive to entrepreneurship which made it difficult for entrepreneurs to thrive in the country. Young entrepreneurs in Ghana face numerous challenges that can be addressed by improved TVET programs. For instance, many young entrepreneurs lack the necessary knowledge and skills to identify viable business opportunities, conduct market research, create business plans, manage finances, and market their products or services effectively. Additionally, many TVET schools in Ghana focus primarily on technical skills rather than entrepreneurial skills, leaving aspiring entrepreneurs ill-prepared for the realities of running a business.

4.3 – The study visit in Cameroon

INTIME is a higher education institute of Cameroon created in 2011, it has three main areas of training known as engineering, social sciences, and management.

In the focus group conducted, students and former students highlighted the following challenges:

- The training received is more theoretical than practical.
- The need of acquiring additional skills related to entrepreneurship, such as marketing, customer relations, and management.
- The lack of information on how to initiate the registration process for their own businesses and how to find funding opportunities.
- The lack of transparency in accessing relevant information.

On the contrary, official institutions stated that the process to register a company is straightforward. Regardless of the easiness of the process, the contrasting information revealed the disconnect between official institutions and entrepreneurs. The same dichotomy is evident when talking about the tax burden on young companies and the low state involvement in supporting entrepreneurial initiatives.

During the session with two successful enterprises (a construction company specialized in modern building and public works and a company focusing on metalwork), the following common challenges and needs were identified:

- The initial challenges in establishing the business linked to the shortage of skilled labor, fluctuating material prices, and economic uncertainty.
- The need for capacity building in various areas such as production, planning, logistics, staff management, and marketing.
- The importance of adopting new equipment and technologies to improve their productivity, quality and reduce the costs.
- The need of improving internal and external communication to be more visible on the market

During the focus group with coordinators and trainers, the following needs emerged:

- A 6-month course duration is insufficient to adequately cover the subject of entrepreneurship and provide comprehensive training to students in this area.
- The need for more advanced entrepreneurship training for teachers to meet the students' needs.
- The complexity of the bureaucratic processes involved in creating a formal business.
- The lack of information and financial resources as significant factors that further complicate the process.

The trainers emphasized that these challenges create barriers for aspiring entrepreneurs, making it difficult for them to navigate the necessary steps and obtain the required funds to establish a formal business.

During the visit to the **Tayim Technical High School**, created in 2010 and opened in 2011, it was possible to observe the difference between a privately managed school and one managed at public level. The Tayim school provides training in auto mechanics, electrical work, carpentry, dressmaking, catering, and ICT to over 2000 students, but it is poorly equipped to handle such a large number of students.

The challenges mentioned are:

- Each workshop has equipment available for only 5 to 10 people, which requires organizing student groups and alternating between theory and practice.
- Based on the opinions of the center's instructors, it is not always possible to provide adequate and effective training to all students, partly due to the outdated equipment available.

The Smart Step delegation visited **CEPAB (Centre of Promotion of Artisans of Bafoussam)**, a social organization created in 1990 that offers technical training to young people from the community, as well as to prisoners, in order to improve their social and professional inclusion. CEPAB provides a three-year training program, resulting in professional certifications recognized by the Ministry. Additionally, they offer internships to students from technical schools for a duration of two to three months. The training programs encompass various fields, such as car repair, mechanical fabrication, woodworking, artisan crafts, and masonry. With an average of only 5–8 students per atelier and a total student population of approximately 30, the school offers a favorable student-to-teacher ratio, fostering personalized attention and engagement.

The challenges expressed by the trainers are:

- To be able to retain students throughout the entire training course: many students leave before completing the training because jobs like motorcycle taxi allow them to have immediate access to some money. In this case, motivation and passion become important variables in successfully completing the training. To prevent this phenomenon, CEPAB also tries to provide opportunities for trainees to work on commissions or external jobs outside the center or make them available to local artisans so they can earn an income.
- The outdated equipment and training materials.
- The need of updating the teaching methods and strengthening staff skills.

Don Bosco Mimboman is a school founded in 1994 that offers eight courses in various disciplines, including graphic design and digital marketing, dressmaking, computing, secretarial office, management, audiovisual production, carpentry, and metalwork. The duration of these courses ranges from 1 to 2 years. The facilities at the institute are well-equipped, and they also engage in product sales and job commissions. The Don Bosco methodology, officially known as the Competence-Based Approach (CBA), focuses on practical skill acquisition and offers customized courses tailored to students' needs. The institute has a comprehensive mentoring process, in which the Job Service Officer covers a key role. He is responsible for orienting students to the job's world by putting them in contact with companies.

However, the school faces several challenges:

- There is competition from other TVET institutions, higher technical training schools, and universities that already offer similar programs. To remain relevant and meet the evolving needs of students, the school recognized the importance of offering new entrepreneurship training programs.
- The current gap between education and the labour market: the majority of graduates ended up working in professions unrelated to their training or remained unemployed, with only a small percentage securing positions at companies and an even smaller number becoming entrepreneurs.

The session where success stories of entrepreneurs were presented was very interesting and highly motivating for the students. All of them came from Don Bosco training program and continue to collaborate with the school offering opportunities of apprenticeship to the students. Four entrepreneurs were presented: the first has a carpentry workshop; the second opened a printer shop; the third has a tailor's shop and the last one is a musician and founded a communication company.

The challenges faced by these entrepreneurs were:

- Finding the necessary initial capital to start a business.
- Registering the business due to complicated, slow, and unclear administrative procedures,
- Finding customers, especially in the initial stages.
- Purchasing the necessary equipment to expand the business.

The lessons learned are:

- Combining perseverance, passion, and motivation with practical work is crucial for the creation of a business.
- The guidance and supervision of teachers are essential in establishing a professional project.
- Even basic specific training can significantly contribute to the successful establishment of a business.
- Students can acquire valuable insights on how to set up a business from both successful and failed experiences.

The Smart Step team visited four companies where some Mimboman Don Bosco students are doing their internship. The programme requires each student to complete a two-months internship at the chosen company. Two tailor's shops, a woodworking shop and a welding workshop were visited.

The challenges arisen are:

- An internship of a two months duration is insufficient for students to acquire comprehensive skills and knowledge in their respective fields.
- Expectations management: managing interns' expectations becomes crucial, emphasizing clear communication about what they can expect from an internship.
- Not all companies offer a learning experience internship. Out of four companies, only one demonstrated a comprehensive training programme (homework and a system for evaluating work done). The selection of high-quality internships is therefore determining.

4.4 Conclusion

The findings from the study visits confirmed the results of the need assessment conducted through the submission of questionnaires to students, teachers, VET Centers, incubators and entrepreneurs in the 2 target countries.

Although the students of the TVET centers visited received some training in entrepreneurship, they lack soft skills (e.g., building self-confidence, good communication, etc.) and an entrepreneurial mindset to be able to identify viable business opportunities, conduct market research, create business plans, manage finances, and market their products or services effectively. Moreover, in many cases, the practical part needs to be boosted, by improving the link with companies for internship and hiring opportunities, but also exchange of ideas and information (e.g. organization of job fair, bringing role models in the class,...).

Besides, offering new entrepreneurship training programs is crucial for TVET schools as well to remain relevant in the educational landscape and meet the evolving needs of students.

The focus groups with teachers confirmed the information about their poor knowledge of the entrepreneurial field due to the lack of formal training on that topic. It became evident that shifting the focus from students to teachers is crucial so that during the six months of vocational training, they can acquire entrepreneurial skills and involve, energize, or encourage students who have interest and potential. By focusing on teachers, it is possible to reach a greater number of students since teachers interact with a large number of students and can motivate them to participate in these courses once they have been trained and acquired those skills.

Furthermore, students lack information on how to get infrastructures, facilities and how to maintain them, marketing and trade with other countries of Africa apart locally, how to access credit from financial institutes and how to register their business.

Additionally, the study visits revealed the importance of coaching and mentorship mechanisms for the students to develop their business ideas and doing market analysis. Finally, integrating stories of entrepreneurial success and failure in the curriculum, emphasizing the lessons learned, can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions

5.1 Findings

Generally, the aspect of entrepreneurship in TVET has remained secondary in the training process. To support students on the journey to become successful entrepreneurs, skilling teachers/instructors in entrepreneurship is key. In addition, the weak relationship between TVET and the private sector together with the mismatch of the official curricula with the very needs of the labour market become evident.

The link between TVET and enterprises should not be limited to the level of internships. Rather, there must be a permanent movement of trainers, students and professionals between TVET and enterprises for schools to keep closer to the changes of the labour market and efficiently adapt their training offer and for students to enter progressively the job's world. Furthermore, the discussion held with students and teachers underscored the need for official institutions to take a more proactive and accessible approach in supporting young entrepreneurs. People often end up paying more in bribes than they would have paid in official fees. This revelation shed light on the systemic challenges faced by young entrepreneurs, where corruption and informal practices overshadow the official support systems. By addressing the information problem, reducing corruption, and actively engaging with the youth, official institutions can create an environment that fosters innovation, growth, and success among the younger generation.

This is critical in countries where the young people aged 15–35 years make up between 35% (Cameroon) and 38% (Ghana) of the country's population and the youth unemployment reaches almost 7%. By providing young entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and knowledge, they can build successful businesses that can contribute to the economic development of their country.

In the perspective of creating a space for mutual knowledge sharing and growth, several good practices and recommendations for the development of the training modules on entrepreneurship have been identified during the three research phases of this report and unpacked in the following part.

These elements shall be intricately associated with the curricular framework that this project aims to construct. The present set of commendable practices and guidance also endeavor to serve as a source of inspiration for vocational education and training (VET) providers, alongside other stakeholders within the realms of education and industry. Their primary objective is to facilitate the development of a VET framework that enhances the efficacy of connecting students with the entrepreneurial sphere.

5.2 Good practices

- Engaging former students

- The practice of employing former students as teachers is a noteworthy positive aspect. This demonstrates the school's commitment to nurturing and empowering its own graduates, providing them with opportunities to pass on their knowledge and expertise to the next generation.
- Former Don Bosco students, now successful entrepreneurs, offering opportunities of apprenticeship to the current students is a noteworthy positive aspect as well.

- Sharing real stories as examples

- The session featuring success stories from young entrepreneurs had a profound impact on the students, as evidenced by their high levels of engagement and active participation. The engagement observed during this session underscores the importance of sharing real-life success stories with students, as it serves to inspire, motivate, and spark meaningful discussions about entrepreneurship and its potential challenges.
- The importance of sharing the stories of failures was also emphasized because they are very useful for students to understand that failure is normal when trying to start one's own business and to learn resilience.

- Hands-on approach

- The Competence-Based Approach (CBA) methodology focusing on practical skill acquisition and offering customized courses tailored to students' needs is a good practice.
- Among good practices, it is the internship in companies which offers opportunities for hands-on experience, exposure to real-world scenarios, and the chance to learn from industry professionals.

- Drop-out prevention, orientation and student engagement

- A limited number of students per class that allows a favorable student-to-teacher ratio, fostering personalized attention and engagement.
- To prevent students' drop-out, CEPAB provides opportunities for trainees to work on commissions or external jobs outside the center or make them available to local artisans to allow them to earn an income.
- The JSO, present in all Don Bosco technical schools, that among its tasks provides counseling and orientation to students to find their own career and connect them to companies is one of the best practices that need to be adopted by other TVET centres.

5.3 Recommendations

- Incorporate examples of successful businesses

- Distinguishing between having a good idea and having a viable business idea is crucial for aspiring entrepreneurs. It is essential to emphasize the significance of developing a promising business idea to increase the likelihood of success. To support this, it is beneficial to incorporate examples of good business ideas tailored to each study course. This approach helps students connect their academic knowledge with real-world applications, encouraging them to think critically about potential ventures.

- Integrate success stories of young entrepreneurs into the training curricula, showcasing their achievements and lessons learned. Additionally, include stories of entrepreneurial failures, emphasizing the valuable lessons that can be gleaned from these experiences, as they contribute to a well-rounded understanding of entrepreneurship.

- Adopting a practical approach

- The TVET centres can set up enterprise incubators to support students in developing their business ideas and doing market analysis. This will have a double benefit: besides supporting the students in having practical experience, the startups established will help the school to open up to the community and offer services. This could diversify the sources of income and strengthen its social and societal components.

- It is crucial to prioritize the establishment of high-quality internship placements where interns receive comprehensive training, including insights into entrepreneurship and the practical aspects of running a business.

- Guidance on bureaucratic aspects

- It would be very helpful for students to receive comprehensive education that includes all the important information necessary for aspiring entrepreneurs, such as how to register a company step by step, how to find learning materials for business planning, and how to access financing options.

- It would be interesting to evaluate public services and determine their relevance and effectiveness in supporting young entrepreneurs. This information is necessary for students to know whether and to what extent it is beneficial for them to cooperate with these institutions. It would be useful to make the information easily accessible to students on how to access and utilize these public services and inform them which services are and are not useful.

- Emphasizing entrepreneurial skills

- Equipping aspiring entrepreneurs with the necessary knowledge on entrepreneurship and soft skills to navigate the business landscape successfully will be beneficial. To achieve this, organizing training for the teachers on entrepreneurial pedagogy together with conducting a study specifically focused on identifying the essential skills for entrepreneurial success in the target context would be necessary.
- Additionally, equipping students with the skills to evaluate the feasibility of their business ideas is imperative. Incorporating market studies into the curriculum and sharing the results with students could be highly valuable. This practical approach would enable students to understand the importance of market analysis, identify target audiences, assess competition, and make informed decisions based on market trends.
- An interesting suggestion is setting up learning platforms with new skills and innovative technology providing entrepreneurs the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively sustain their enterprises in the fast-changing business environment.

- Encouraging networking

- Organize regular networking sessions among graduates who aspire to establish their own companies for exchanging experiences, frustrations, motivations, struggles, and passions, fostering a supportive community where aspiring entrepreneurs can find inspiration and guidance could be an option. To ensure the effectiveness of these sessions, a dedicated trainer or mentor should be present. By combining peer-to-peer support with the guidance of a skilled trainer, these gatherings offer young entrepreneurs the necessary tools and resources to navigate the entrepreneurial journey with confidence and resilience. In addition, promoting peer-learning between different TVET schools within the country, but also between different countries, such as Ghana and Cameroon, is advisable.
- Supporting students in establishing alliances and fostering collaboration is crucial for entrepreneurial success. Building alliances and partnerships can leverage diverse strengths, resources, and expertise, leading to more innovative solutions and shared success. By promoting a cooperative mindset and providing guidance on effective teamwork and alliance-building strategies, students can develop the necessary skills to thrive in the collaborative nature of entrepreneurship, steering away from the limitations of a one-person show.

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