

## Re-imagining tomorrow: our turn, our time, our future

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**Comfort Asare**

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### Introduction

According to the online Oxford English Dictionary, re-imagining is defined as 'the action or process of forming a new or different mental or pictorial image' (Oxford English Dictionary 2021). Re-imagining tomorrow can simply be defined as having a new view of the future and what it holds for one. To be successful in your endeavour, there are key decisions that must be taken, such as the need to work tirelessly to change a prevailing status quo. The environment within which the youth operate needs to be improved to enable them to create a better future for themselves.

### Decisions that change lives

Life often presents crossroads where you need to take a decision that will make a lasting impact, be it positive or negative. Making critical decisions must involve critical thinking and not be done haphazardly. Care must be taken because the results of today's decision will have a lasting outcome that will invariably alter a person's life for better or worse.

According to Rohn (n.d.), when making a key decision in life, it must be done tactfully. A person could have a transformational change today that will ultimately turn a their life around. There is the need to make a conscious effort to effect that change by creating the enabling environment to support it. Everyone has an opportunity to change the status quo if they so wish. As young people, being adventurous can spark a mission in us. We need to be positive-minded if we desire a future that could be referred to as our turn and our time.

The youth represent tomorrow's future leaders as they will take up key positions within the contexts in which they find themselves. They must therefore embrace principles that are upright to be able to make the positive impact that we all desire.

## Changing the status quo

Successes in the future will depend on the way we lead our lives today. There is a popular quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson that says: 'Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail,' (Goodreads Inc 2021). As young people, we need to move out of our comfort zones and create a path that future generations will remember us for.

Changing the status quo may not be easy. There will be looming challenges, disappointments, and storms. To quote *Vince Lombardi*: 'Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile,' (Rapid Evolution LLC 2021). In striving to become leaders, we should be prepared for the price that comes with that endeavour and forge ahead.

Before you can form a new opinion about something, there is always the need to look back to the past, assess the mistakes that were made, and accept the fact that you want to change things. Wisdom is needed to help us fix past mistakes and hold on to our dignity and sanity (Templar 2011).

The youth can be successful if we keep several options open. We need to be flexible in our thinking and should be prepared to make amendments when a storm occurs. You can get knocked off course if you are not alert.

## The changing landscape

The youth of today exist in an environment that is multifaceted due to emerging economic, cultural, demographic, digital, and political factors. The environment is very complicated and requires the youth to take advantage of the challenges that exist and birth some opportunities. It is only when we consider the varying perspectives and make the right impact that we can say with certainty that we are re-imagining tomorrow. Lip service does not bring change; action does. To make the future our own, we need to develop all the requisite competence of social-emotional skills as well as the right technological competence (OECD 2018).

The 21st century has presented several global challenges that affect the developmental well-being of the youth in various areas including health, climate, economics, and politics. The challenges we face are enormous (Bodiford 2013). You need to be aware of the changes taking place in the traditional arenas. The youth are seen as the source of answers to dire questions when they apply ourselves to the current challenges. There

are several governmental policies around the world that support the youth, such as the National Youth Policy in South Africa. It is therefore required that the youth do not sit on the fence but instead fully participate in sectors that concern them. There is the need for the youth to take advantage of empowerment opportunities that will enable them to sustain the future that they hope to have in the areas of politics and economics (Ergler & Wood 2015). In Ghana, for instance, the government has implemented several youth empowerment programmes, such as the Nation Builders Corps (NABCO) and the Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP). These have been instituted to offer lifelong learning opportunities to the youth. These opportunities also grant them access to education which will prepare them to face the challenges of today and the future (Tagoe & Oheneba-Sakyi 2015). The endorsement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 created the requisite conditions for children and young people to be engaged in issues affecting their well-being and to occupy leadership positions, which will further foster their inclusive agenda (Ergler & Wood 2015). The youth must come on board in all spheres of life to create a sustainable future. They must also be positive about their contributions to the improvement of society.

In the wake of the current pandemic that has ravaged economies globally, there is the need for young people to spearhead initiatives in all sectors of society. There were job losses around the world as a result of the restrictions put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19 job losses. The effects on lower-income countries were devastating (International Labour Organization 2020). As a result, youth unemployment has increased significantly (Maluleke & Harley 2016). However, amid these challenges, entrepreneurship has been promoted extensively among young people, which will support estranged youth to enter the mainstream economy. In developing countries, the youth have identified the importance of self-employment and are therefore engaging in several ventures that will support their individual lives, their families, and their nations (Khanna 2015). In Ghana, for example, one major aspect of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) is the total entrepreneurial activity (TEA). The GEM has reported that females account for the highest TEA among the youth cohort, accounting for 44% while their male counterparts account for 40%. Thus, women are more entrepreneurial than men. Most of the youth engaged in entrepreneurial activities are between the ages of 25 and 34 years (Owusu, Yankson & Osei 2016).

There are a number of factors that may mitigate the effectiveness of youth entrepreneurs' activities, including the lack of entrepreneurship education and training, access to finance and start-up capital, risk and self-confidence, business development and support services, and strict administrative and regulatory frameworks (Langevang, Gough, Yankson, Owusu & Osei 2015).

A study carried out by Arhinful (2018) in Ghana showed that 60,6% of young entrepreneurs were hopeful of succeeding in their various ventures, while 41,5% were had a negative outlook. On the issue of funding for their businesses, about 48,8% of the respondents depended on their personal savings to fund their business, with 29,6% having support from financial institutions. There are certain factors that may drive the youth to engage in entrepreneurial activities. According to this study, while some began their businesses to make a profit, others were reluctant to work for others or wanted to have some degree of independence in decision-making. The latter reason can drive the youth forward in their attempt to make a positive impact on the economies of their countries, resulting in the creation of a future that they can own.

## **Conclusion**

From the above, it can be concluded that the youth, in their effort to reimage tomorrow, need to be empowered through the acquisition of the right skills. The youth must work at changing the status quo by embracing decisions that can change their lives. They should also be creative to be able to promote their professional development. The youth in Ghana, and globally must be conscious of the fact that the future can only be our turn and our time if we stay positive. Moreover, the different contexts within which the youth operate and the opportunities that exist must be explored and taken advantage of to reimage tomorrow and make it our own.

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