

## Possible Career Paths - Part 1 -After Junior High or High School

Dear Friends,

The January article, an *Introduction* to this series *Possible Career Paths*, gave some background on the Ghanaian educational system. This article will discuss the opportunities available to those *Learners/students* who are *unable* to continue their education past the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade *Junior High School* or the 12<sup>th</sup> Grade *High School*.

The Ghanaian system, from the colonial period up till our independence, was based on what was described as **castle schools**. The purpose was mainly to produce from among the local (Ghanaian) people, an exclusive group of people to help with the clerical work needed to make the trading and religious activities among the indigenous people less complex, because their knowledge would remove the barriers to communication for religious and commercial purposes. The **priests** and the merchants who came down with the colonizers, needed native Ghanaian people to facilitate these interactions. Those were the first **career paths** for selected, identified brilliant children, of well to do people in the community. These children were taken through what came to be known as the **3R's** (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), all in the English language. This system was expanded to become the *universal basic education* for all Ghanaian children. It was based on the British education system: primary school (O' Level), secondary school (A' Level) and tertiary school/level, which is college. This system was then modified to be patterned more after the American system.

The reasons for a Learner/Student to not move forward with education beyond Grades 9 and/or 12, are many, and the singular one amongst all is lack of financing up to tertiary/college. Notwithstanding, as described in the January article, there are several other **paths** for any Learner to choose.

The Learner/Student who is unable to continue school after Grade 9 doesn't have as many choices, whereas the Learner who graduates at Grade 12 has several more choices. The average **9<sup>th</sup> Grade graduate** is about **16 years old**, (in our part of the world). He or she will end up with an **apprenticeship** or find himself/herself as one of the many who are always on the streets peddling in all kinds of wares:

*such as ... dog chains, windscreen wipers, snacks, etc.,* to drivers who are held up by the traffic lights. Indeed, most of them don't have the requisite literary resources to be gainfully employed. Some end up doing menial jobs, and particularly the girls, become housekeepers in people's homes, where gross exploitation often takes place. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade graduate has a certificate, but it's not really enough to be gainfully employed. Of course, quite a few have the basic **3R's** skills, that is why they are able to communicate somehow in the list of **paths** described above.

In the January article, I wrote that the government also has a facility, known as the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) where those who are brilliant **9<sup>th</sup> Grade graduates**, and do not have High School Certificates, can be trained to acquire skills such as: masons, electricians, mechanics, etc. Then these skilled certified artisans, present their certificate of proficiency, and are very valuable in the industries and other skilled labor places of employment. Such graduates constitute a significant labor force in our economy.

The average **12<sup>th</sup> Grade graduate** is about **22 years old**. He/she will graduate **12<sup>th</sup> Grade/High School**, awarded with a certificate that *does* have relevance in the working world. One may safely assume that this Learner/Student's level of the **3R's** is higher than the 9<sup>th</sup> grade graduate, since no child can gain admission into the Senior High (secondary) without having an adequate pass, if not excellence on the exams.

The **12<sup>th</sup> Grade graduate**, upon failing to enter college, is still more favorably placed than those who are only 9<sup>th</sup> Grade graduates. The 12<sup>th</sup> Grade graduate who doesn't get the requisite pass to enter college, has these other **career paths** to choose from: *nursing, teaching, laboratory technician, lower class civil service in the government, secretary/admin assistant, the police service, the military,* and other positions in the general economy that require proficiency in the available skills-oriented jobs. For most of the **careers** mentioned in the list above, merely having a certificate that one has successfully passed the Senior High School (12<sup>th</sup> Grade) examination (WASCE) and has therefore acquired the certificate, does not exempt the applicant from attending an interview which most of the time requires passing some form of additional (written) test to acquire the job.

Next month, Part Two will focus on those that make it into the tertiary/college institutions.

-- Pastor Ben Wilson