

Strategies for improving the employability skills and life chances of youths in Nigeria

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Aims

- ▶ To examine some of the difficulties experienced by young people in Nigeria when seeking employment opportunities, with a focus on employability skills as a way to overcome these barriers and form a basis for strategies to improve young people's life chances.
- ▶ We also compare how employability skills are implemented in schools and colleges in the United Kingdom as compared to Nigerian schools and colleges, with particular reference to the role of work experience.
- ▶ *Key Words: Employability, Mentoring, Wider-world, Work-Experience, Guest-speakers, Apprenticeships, Career Development.*



Youth unemployment in Nigeria

- ▶ 11.1 million 15–34 year olds unemployed (Akande, 2014)
- ▶ Two-thirds of this group aged 15–24
- ▶ More females than males are unemployed
- ▶ High levels of unemployment among graduates



Government schemes to tackle unemployment

- ▶ Graduate Internship Scheme
- ▶ Community Services Scheme
- ▶ Vocational Training Scheme
- ▶ Women and Youth Empowerment Scheme
- ▶ Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria scheme, (YOU-WIN)
- ▶ Osun State Youth Employment scheme (OYES)



Employability – definition

“a set of achievements – skills, understanding and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”.

– Yorke (2004)



Approaches to developing employability in UK and Nigeria

- ▶ *Sure-P programme*
- ▶ *Apprenticeships*
- ▶ *Mentoring*
- ▶ *Guest Speakers*
- ▶ *Work Experience*
- ▶ *Improving the literacy and numeracy skills of young people*



Methodology



- ▶ 44 BTEC Business vocational students based within a sixth form college in the United Kingdom
- ▶ 2 questionnaires each
 - – on a recent work experience event
 - – on an employability skills workshop.
- ▶ Qualitative data from interview with employability manager.



- ▶ Secondary research was also conducted to consider the current state of youth unemployment in Nigeria. Previous observations during recent visits to Nigeria were also taken into consideration, current practices within Nigeria's secondary schools and institutions of higher learning were also used for the purpose of this research.



Findings

- ▶ Majority of UK students attested to value of work experience within their academic programme; with almost half of them being offered part time jobs at the end of the exercise.
- ▶ Majority of students stated that they would like another phase of work experience, and that they had gained skills they did not previously have.
- ▶ Majority of the students found use of guest speakers an important resource in terms of improving their understanding of employability skills.



Skills students developed through work experience

- ▶ Customer service skills
- ▶ Commercial awareness
- ▶ Problem solving
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Confidence
- ▶ Financial knowledge
- ▶ Organisational skills
- ▶ Presentation skills
- ▶ Communication skills
- ▶ Technological skills
- ▶ Handling complaints
- ▶ Working under pressure
- ▶ Book keeping skills
- ▶ Conversing with customers
- ▶ Time management
- ▶ Time-keeping
- ▶ Making reservations.



Can UK student experiences inform employability in Nigeria?

- ▶ Improving the employability skills of young people in Nigeria is essential.
- ▶ Current initiatives such as Sure-P Programme positive but insufficient to deal with the current unemployment crisis
- ▶ Many of Nigerian youths lack the basic skills to gain employment in the first place.
- ▶ Intensive investment in education embedded with work experience, employability skills and adequate government funding for many schools in Nigeria has a key role to play.



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