
Incorporating intentional professional mentorship in youth job placement and entrepreneurship to address youth unemployment in Kenya

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Abstract

Youth unemployment has been a perennial challenge in Kenya more so in the urban informal settlements. Every year major learning institutions graduate hundreds of thousands of students after completion of either high school, college or university education. These youths migrate from rural communities to urban centres to scramble for the few formal employment opportunities. Some who are innovative join the informal sector but a majority lack job opportunities and they wallow in poverty and some end up engaging in crime, alcoholism, drug and substance abuse among other vices. This study seeks to assess the possibility of incorporating intentional professional mentorship in youth job placement and entrepreneurship to address youth unemployment in Kenya. Specifically, the study explored the attitude of employers and seasoned entrepreneurs towards youth, the perception of youth towards professional mentorship, government policy on professional mentorship and the challenges of engaging youth as professional mentees. The study is grounded on a zone of proximal development theory and cognitive development theories. The study adopted a qualitative approach with an exploratory design. A total of 100 youth, 20 employers and 20 entrepreneurs were sampled using purposive random sampling. Data were collected through phone interviews, face to face interviews, WhatsApp Messaging and Email interviews. The study revealed that employers and seasoned entrepreneurs have a negative attitude towards youth as they perceive them as inexperienced and not ready for the job market, the youth, on the other hand, have been oriented to start work immediately after graduating therefore they are not ready to learn, the government policy in place but there are no incentives towards employers and entrepreneurs to facilitate implementation, the government internship policy excludes the high school graduates worsening youth unemployment and the negative attitude of youth towards professional mentorship, the financial burden of engaging mentees and the negative perception towards youth by employers and seasoned entrepreneurs undermines professional mentorship in Kenya. The study recommends that the youth should be sensitized to the need for professional mentorship, this will change their attitude and thus embrace professional mentorship, government policy is amended to include high school graduates and introduce incentives and tax cuts to employers and seasoned entrepreneurs to encourage them to offer intentional professional mentorship to the youth.

Keywords: youth, unemployment, entrepreneurship, professional mentorship

