

The Contribution of Internship Programme in Increasing Employability Opportunities for Youth Graduates with Disabilities in Rwanda - A Case Study Connect Project for Uwezo Youth Empowerment

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Abstract: *Despite the efforts of disability organizations, advocates, and government legislations aimed at providing persons with disabilities equality in all aspects of society, Rwandan youth with disabilities continue to face issues of poverty and unemployment at rates substantially higher than those for non-disabled Rwandans. Approximately 5% of 10 million inhabitants are persons with disabilities NISR 2012. In Rwanda, the majority of youth graduates with disabilities are not employed by any institution yet they are qualified for the job. Some of the reasons that have been a limiting factor for their employment include lacking work experiences, discrimination of employers, inaccessible job information and recruitment process and others. General and specific objectives as it is focusing on the contribution of paid internship programme in increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda. Research design is "a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. This study was adopted descriptive research design. The target population for the study consists 92 youth graduates obtained internship through UWEZO connect project. This study was used questionnaire technique as data collection instrument. The internship programme explains employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda, especial in UWEZO connect project in Rwanda. Increasing internship programme has an overall correlation with employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities of 0.733 which is strong and positive. This means that approximately 73.3% variations of independent Variable are explained the dependent variable at 5% level of significance. These indicate good fit of the regression equation used. The overall significance of the regression estimation model, It indicates that the model is significant in explaining the relationship between Internship programme and increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities at 5% level of significance. Analysis of Variance shows that f -calculated is greater than f - critical that is $6.321 > 0.00$. Paid internship programmes is the most significant in explaining the employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities with a significance of 0.000 which is less than a p -value of 0.05 and beta value is 0.884. Based on the information drawn from the table above the researcher concluded that the effect of the variables paid internship; unpaid internship and cooperative internship is phenomenal in favor for increasing employment in youth graduate with disability in Rwanda. The effect of paid internship programme on increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda was appreciated with the majority of respondents. After analyzing and interpretation of the data, the researcher came up with the following recommendations: The evidences form the results indicated that paid internship programme has a high positive correlation to the increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda. In this regard Researcher recommends to the UWEZO project that, to continue providing some money for the interns because, it's helping them to work hard.*

1. Background of the study

Worldly, it is well documented that internship can realize many benefits for all stakeholders. For employers, internship provides access to a pool of workers who are usually enthusiastic and dedicated to the industry and who bring fresh ideas to the workplace. It also provides them the opportunity to screen potential employees without making long term commitments and to have direct involvement in training the industries' future managers (Walo, 24 September 2014).

Internship can enhance collaborative research opportunities, raise the institution's profile and establish long term working relationships between industry and the organization to optimize future graduate employment opportunities. For students, internship provides opportunities to practice what they have learnt in the classroom, gain a greater understanding of the industries' requirements, test career

choices and develop important hands-on workplace skills. It is further argued that internship contributes to developing students' management competencies (Colyer, 2000). Students through internship can reportedly develop competence in several generic areas of management, including leadership, human resources, oral and written communication, interpersonal communication, problem solving, teamwork, planning and decision-making (Walo, 24 September 2014). Therefore like students, youth graduates with disabilities through internship can develop competence in leadership, human resources, team work, and interpersonal communication and so on in order to enhance employability opportunities.

Furthermore, enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities is one of the main concerns of the disability sector in Rwanda. When one looks at the micro level, it may seem like there has been progress. There is increased awareness amongst partners and people with

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disabilities. There has been advocacy on the Government to implement, the provisions in the Disability Act 2007 and the UNCRPD (2006). Even though there is no law mandating the private sector to employ persons with disabilities, some institutions have taken proactive measures to employ persons with disabilities (UWEZO, 2015).

The Rwanda's Employment policy demands for the employment of persons with disabilities if they get the same score in job examinations with other non disabled applicants. A study conducted by UWEZO Youth Empowerment on access to work and employment for youth with disabilities revealed that 72% of youth with disabilities between the age of 16-35 are not employed. According to the National Employment Programme "Kora wigire", 200,000 job opportunities was created leading to a reduction in the unemployment rate most especially among youth and women (UWEZO, 2015).

There is a wide gap between the employment rate of people with and without disabilities in the country. Therefore, the above target for bringing down the unemployment rate cannot be achieved without addressing the employment issues of people with disabilities, who constitute about 5% of the population of 11 million people (NISR, 2012). It would require proactive initiative on the part of all concerned to ensure that disability is included in the employment programmes of the Government and the private sector.

This study is dealing with the contribution of internship programme in increasing employability opportunity for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda, hence case study is the connect project for UWEZO Youth Empowerment. In Rwanda, the only disability organization providing employment opportunity for youth graduates with disabilities is UWEZO Youth Empowerment (UWEZO). UWEZO advocates for the rights of youth with disabilities and support their development in different areas like business entrepreneurship, education, ICT and youth mobilization and has put much effort in enabling youth with disabilities have access to work and employment through the "Connect Project". The Connect Project identifies and train youth graduates for 2 weeks on employable soft skills like communication, CV writing, job searching, reporting and above all, giving them knowledge on disability and rights, the pre placement training take place for a two-week period whereby selected young people with disabilities received employment-related training and were then to be placed in a six month internship in institutions/companies of their career.

This is an opportunity for all eligible Rwandans including those with disabilities. However, due to issues mentioned above, benefiting from the opportunity has been abit problematic. The research will explore the effects of internship programmes and the experiences of youth graduates in accessing employment in line with their disability needs.

The UWEZO study was qualitative in nature, consisting primarily of one-on-one interviews with youth with disabilities in the programme. Through these interviews,

UWEZO identified several themes related to employment for this particular group. Quotations and stories were grouped according to the theme identified, and were analyzed and presented using a critical model of disability. The themes identified were also used in partnership with the participants of the training project to develop an evaluation tool.

This experience motivated me to do a thesis in the area of disability employment, and also of my reluctance to impose my own research ideas on a community that had already identified areas worth researching.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the efforts of disability organizations, advocates, and government legislations aimed at providing persons with disabilities equality in all aspects of society, Rwandan youth with disabilities continue to face issues of poverty and unemployment at rates substantially higher than those for non-disabled Rwandans. Approximately 5% of 10 million inhabitants are persons with disabilities NISR 2012. Many Disabled People's Organizations caution that this is a conservative estimate, due to the stigma associated with self-identifying as disabled. The figures might be higher given the consequences of the 1990 war of liberation and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis (NISR, 2012). The WHO estimates that 15% of the world populations are persons with disabilities (WHO, 2013).

Series of research on employment for youth with disabilities reported that persons with disabilities are many times more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled counterparts (McLoughlin 1987, Neufeldt, 2001). The effect of marginalizing persons with disabilities from economic participation has obvious implications on their wealth. It is well known that employment status also has wide spread effects on a person's health and overall well being (Neufeldt, 2001)

According to Neufeldt (2001) integrated, competitive employment for persons with disabilities can lead to many benefits, including long term interactions with community and co-workers, increased choice and decision making ability, increased economic earnings, enhanced status, and an overall increase in quality of life.

Many reasons have been postulated for the exclusion of youth with disabilities from the workforce. Lack of education, motivation, and experience, financial disincentives built into income assistance programs, and physical barriers to access have been cited as conditions leading to high unemployment for persons with disabilities (Hendricks, 2006). Some of these explanations focus on the individual as a unit of analysis, failing to consider the systemic issues that contribute to unemployment for this group. Organizations representing persons with disabilities denounce such individualistic explanations and focus instead on institutional and social barriers. While these studies are often much better at providing systemic analysis for the exclusion of people with disabilities, they are largely perpetrated by attitudinal, social, physical and legislative

discrepancy that have not fully embraced aspects of disability inclusion.

This study do reflect the experience of youth with disabilities in accessing work and employment and the contribution of paid internship programs to securing employment for youth graduates with disabilities. Finally, most studies related to employment issues for people with disabilities fail to consider the broader life experiences (such as education and family support) of individuals in their examination. Although these experiences may not be specifically related to employment, many youth graduates with disabilities do impact on the self-esteem, motivation, and the success of individuals as youth graduates with disabilities struggle to transition from tertiary education into employment.

While some case studies of employment initiatives for disabilities are beginning to emerge (Neufeldt, 2001), almost no information exists which discusses the specific issues faced by youth with disabilities. While this group may share many similarities to their older counterparts, one can assume that the experience of youth with disabilities has changed significantly in the past decades. The advancement of medical technology, community and educational integration, and changing social attitudes will have made the lives of these young people much different than those experienced by older persons with disabilities.

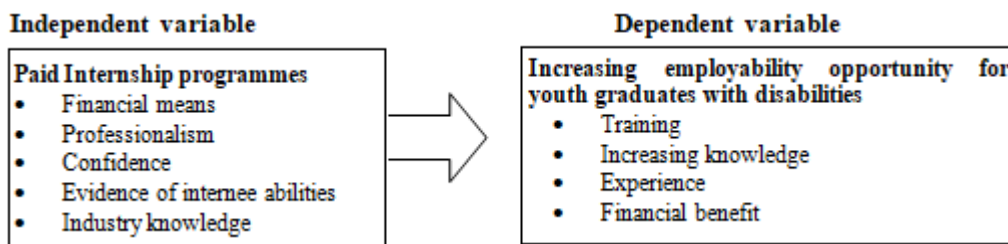
In Rwanda, the majority of youth graduates with disabilities are not employed by any institution yet they are qualified for the job. Some of the reasons that have been a limiting factor for their employment include lacking work experiences, discrimination of employers, inaccessible job information and recruitment process and others. Since employment is one of the major issue faced by fresh graduates in Rwanda, the government initiated a six (6) months internship programme for university graduates in order to give them chance to gain some experience that could help them pass job examinations. This programme is implemented under the National Capacity Building Secretariat (NCBS) (UWEZO , 2015).

From this background, the researcher wonders why such problem is happen, hence conducting a research on the contribution of paid internship programme in increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda, the connect project for UWEZO youth empowerment is the focused point of this study.

3. Objective of the Study

To examine the contribution of paid Internship programmes on increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda.

4. Conceptual Framework



Research Design

Research design is “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. This study was adopted descriptive research design. This approach provides an opportunity to establish the relationship between Internship programme and employability opportunity for youth graduates with disabilities (Glass & Hopkins, 2008).

Population of the Study

All the items under consideration in any field of inquiry constitute a population. It can be presumed that in such an inquiry when all the items are covered no element of chance is left and highest accuracy is obtained. Sekaran (1999) reported that population refers to the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. Quite often the researcher selects only a few items from the population for the study purposes. The items so selected constitute what is technically called a sample. Moreover, any research population must be accurately specified in order to collect the required data for the research problem. The research population consists of youth

graduates with disabilities obtained paid internship through UWEZO connect project. Therefore, the target population for the study consists 92 youth graduates obtained internship through UWEZO connect project

Data collection instruments

This study used questionnaire instrument while during field survey thus. Primary data was obtained and documentary instrument was employed in order to get secondary data.

Research findings and discussion

Paid internship program in UWEZO connect project

To highlight the contribution of paid internship programme for youth graduated with disability employment in Rwanda, the respondents were asked to highlight how paid internship programme for youth graduated with disability in Rwanda is being implemented in UWEZO connect project. effect of unpaid internship programmes on increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda.

Table 1: The respondents' view on paid internship program in UWEZO connect project

Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Paid internship programme help the internees to get the financial means	53.8	46.2	0	0	3.5385	.49887
Paid internship programme help the internees to get the professionalism	61.5	38.5	0	0	3.6154	.49637
Paid internship programme help the internees to get the confidence	53.8	46.2	0	0	3.5385	.49887
Paid internship programme help the internees to get the evidence of internee abilities	23.1	76.9	0	0	3.7692	.43853
Paid internship programme help the internees to get the abroad knowledge	53.8	46.2	0	0	3.5385	.49887

Source: Primary data, 2018

Table 1 revealed the perception of respondents on paid internship programme. In assessing these variable 5 statements (Items) were considered and the findings are presented in the Table 1. reveals that the youth graduates work with UWEZO connect project agreed that internship programme through the 5 statement such are paid internship programme help the internees to get the financial means; Paid internship programme help the internees to get the professionalism; paid internship programme help the internees to get the confidence; paid internship programme help the internees to get the evidence of internee abilities and paid internship programme help the internees to get the abroad knowledge with percentage of 100 % of respondents for each statement .

The first item was to know whether paid internship programme help the internees to get the financial means. It was scored the mean of 3.5385 (strong), which mean that respondents agree that paid internship programme help the internees to get the financial means and the standard deviation of .49887 (homogeneous) which means that all respondents share the same understanding. In the second element researcher would like to know whether Paid internship programme help the internees to get the professionalism. With a mean 3.6154 (strong), the respondents strongly agreed that Paid internship programme help the internees to get the professionalism and the standard deviation of .49637 (homogeneous) means that all respondents the same understanding.

In the third element researcher would like to know whether paid internship programme help the internees to get the confidence. With a mean 3.5385 (strong), the respondents strongly agreed that paid internship programme help the internees to get the confidence and the standard deviation of .49887 (homogeneous) means that all respondents the same understanding. In the fourth element researcher would like to know whether paid internship programme help the internees to get the evidence of internee abilities.

With a mean 3.7692 (strong), the respondents strongly agreed that paid internship programme help the internees to get the evidence of internee abilities and the standard deviation of .43853 (homogeneous) means that all respondents the same understanding. The last assessment was about to know whether paid internship programme help the internees to get the abroad knowledge. And almost all respondents but not all strongly agreed with this with mean 3.5385 (strong), and the standard deviation of .49887 (homogeneous). Generally, all five items assessing the paid internship to the youth graduates with disability in Rwanda showed the overall mean of 3.60002 (strong). This is to say that respondents agreed that paid internship to the youth

graduates with disability in Rwanda was appreciated in the last 3 years.

5. Conclusion

According to the interpretation of collected and analyzed data during the course of this study the researcher came up with the following conclusions:

Based on the information drawn from the above table 1, the researcher concluded that the effect of the variables paid internship is phenomenal in favor for increasing employment in youth graduate with disability in Rwanda.

The effect of paid internship programme on increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda was appreciated with the majority of respondents.

Moreover, the main challenges faced by UWEZO Connect project are, insufficient of money provided to the internees during internship programme, no data at district level even at national level about children with disability at age to start primary school, lack of the follow up the internees after internship programme in Uwezo connect project team also a crucial challenge that needs to be improved.

6. Recommendations

After analyzing and interpretation of the data, the researcher came up with the following recommendations: The evidences form the results indicated that paid internship programme has a high positive correlation to the increasing employability opportunities for youth graduates with disabilities in Rwanda. In this regard Researcher recommends to the UWEZO project that, to continue providing some money for the interns because, it's helping them to work hard.

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