

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: THE SITUATION IN BRITAIN

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NEET

- In my previous line of work as a research officer for a social enterprise, I became very familiar with the situation in the UK and what is preventing many young people from accessing the labour market and fulfilling their potential.
- Today in the UK there are **800,000** young people aged 16 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training; also known as NEET.

Unemployment Rate

- The 16 to 24 unemployment rate stands at **11.9%**, representing 482,000 young people. Although this is low by the standards of the UK, it is slightly above the OECD average of 11.1%.

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- *Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: November 2019, Office for National Statistics*

What are the problems?

- So, what is getting in the way of these young people?
- Youth Employment UK's 'Youth Voice Census', attempts to answer this question.
- It is an annual survey of 14 to 24 year olds used to understand the perspectives and experiences of young people in their progression towards or within employment.

- **Mental Health**
- **Location and travel costs**
- **Lacking experience**
- **Lacking skills**
- **Lacking understanding of what skills are desired**
- **Lacking Confidence**

Other factors

- Other factors in the UK that affect youth unemployment are crime, poverty, abusive family history and of course the labour market.
- There are several complex factors that influence society and that these statistics can also be imperfect.
- In fact, the quality of impact measurement of employability enhancing programmes is not often very high.
- With that in mind, the focus of this paper will be on some of the employability enhancing programmes being implemented for young people by social enterprises that have been able to demonstrate their effectiveness.

Introducing The Princes Trust

- Founded by the Prince of Wales in 1976, The Princes Trust has supported those aged 10 to 30 years of age to develop the skills and self-belief to transition into the workforce and maximise their potential.
- The Princes Trust has supported over 950,000 young people, including those who are unemployed, having difficulty at school or have criminal records.
- The trust offers young people the practical and financial support, with 75% of those helped successfully moving into work, education or training.



- A key aspect of The Princes Trust is partnership. They have around 1,200 operational and strategic partners;
- partners who deliver their programmes in Further Education colleges, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Police Service, Her Majesty's Armed Forces and schools who run their education programmes.
- The theme of collaborative partnerships is central to the Princes Trust and enables young people to receive support from many voices at once.

The 'Team Programme'

- The Princes Trust Team Programme has had more than 213,000 young participants since its inception in 1990.
- The programme lasts for 12 weeks and is designed to help improve English and Maths skills, improve confidence, gain new skills (such as teamwork, problem solving and leadership) and gain a nationally recognised qualification.



- On the first day, youth who have signed up are put into groups of approximately 12 and are encouraged to socialise and get comfortable with their new peers through activities.
- This is an important part of helping young people prepare to form bonds in their professional lives.
- Following this, the first week involves detailed planning with advisors from The Princes Trust, setting out what it is that each individual wants to achieve and figuring out how to obtain their desired qualifications.

The second week

- The second week involves a week-long trip away from home with the team, where participants try new things and learn to work with others.
- This serves several purposes.
- For many who seek the help of The Princes Trust, their current environment or situation in life may be playing a part in holding them back: poor areas with high crime, areas with low quality education and job opportunities and even family troubles that affect mental health.
- Taking them into a different environment is believed to help them enter a different and positive mindset.
- The group activities during this week, such as rowing, climbing and hiking are designed to informally communicate teamwork, interpersonal and leadership skills.

- From week three until week six, the team decides on a project to benefit their local community, fundraise for it and then execute it.
- One example involved a team who wanted to provide age-appropriate books to a local school, specifically to benefit teenagers with reading difficulties. The team decided to write and produce a series of six books for the school.
- After researching printing companies, they raised £1000 by engaging with local businesses to encourage donations and organising a pub quiz.
- They then consulted with pupils in order to choose topics relevant to them, including anxiety around starting college and alcohol safety.
- The team worked hard to produce the books, splitting up responsibilities such as photography, visual design and scripting.
- These activities helped the group develop creative, planning, teamwork skills and effective allocation of responsibility.
- The schools expect that these books will be read by thousands of pupils over the next few years, with some team members planning to repeat this activity at schools for pupils with learning disabilities.
- Such stories are also excellent for job interviews, showing potential employers that you are socially conscious.

- Weeks seven and eight involve work placements, where participants are able to demonstrate how the skills that they have been refining can help them in the real world of work.
- This is also an opportunity for participants to sample specific types of work and companies to help them plan their future career destinations.
- The ninth week involves further preparation for the future, where participants get assistance writing a strong resume, practicing interview skills and writing applications.
- This step is a massive confidence boost for young people who are unsure of themselves and unable to communicate the skills they possess.
- During weeks ten to eleven, participants are further challenged to help their community, testing to see how far they have progressed and apply lessons-learned.
- The twelfth and final week involves delivering a presentation.
- This is an opportunity for participants to evaluate their performances and successes and build confidence.

- This appears to be an effective programme, as 75% of participants end up on a college course or in employment in within just three months. It is important to note what makes this programme such a success:

Access & Inspiration

- Through extensive partnerships with employers, The Princes Trust is able to expose young people to a wide variety of sectors, some of which they may not have considered on their own.
- Removing people from their daily routines can also help them break away from unproductive behaviour and reinforce the theme of progress.

Skill building

- **Skill building:** Budgeting, teamwork, leadership, creativity and public speaking are all part of developing competency in young people.

Confidence building

- From the team activities, to the CV workshop to the presentation, the programme strives to help young people overcome their lack of confidence by making them feel prepared and self-assured.

Qualifications

- The on-hand work experience and careers advice help direct young people to courses that will match their desires. Qualifications, such as management and publishing, can act as the first step to higher level qualifications or even a pathway to employment.

'Get Into' Programmes

- The Get Into programmes, delivered by the Princes Trust, provide young people with training, sector-specific work experience and career direction.
- In collaboration with partnered employers, the trust designs a programme approximately 4 weeks long.
- This is an opportunity to interact with several sectors in the UK such as health and social care, construction, customer service, engineering, retail and hospitality; all while improving one's CV and interview skills.
- Many of the courses involve a trial shift with potential job offers available at the end.
- These courses are completely free, compensation is paid for travel and support may also be available for lunch and childcare costs. At the end of the course, participants have the opportunity to compete for jobs and apprenticeships with the lead employer.
- After the programme, a member of staff from the Princes Trust or a volunteer will act as a mentor for participants for up to six months to help ensure a successful transition into employment.
- Many of the recruits will be educationally disadvantaged and a number will have a past history of being in foster care.
- The proportion of young people who are disabled, educational under-achievers or single parents is typically high.
- Nearly 40% had below five A-C GCSEs, 14% were disabled and 5% were foster care leavers.

Get Into – Govia Thameslink Railways (GTR)

- To date the Get into Railways programme has helped 182 18-25 year olds acquire work experience and new skills, producing an estimated £1.6 million of social benefit to UK society.
- Over three quarters of participants successfully transitioned into full time employment in the GTR network.

- The first half of this four-week intensive course takes place in a classroom setting.
- Here participants learn key customer service skills, conflict resolution, first aid and health & safety.
- In the second fortnight participants are given hands-on experience in GTR under the supervision of trained and experienced mentors at train stations, Headquarters or train depots.
- Alongside this direct support, The Princes Trust provides structural support in the form of financial support, advice and guidance.
- Through mentoring and on-the-job experience, the programme has helped young people build transferable skills.
- The GTR progression mentors play a vital role in supporting the young people on this course.
- 17 dedicated progression mentors volunteered approximately five hours per month, in fact Since 2014 nearly 1,000 volunteering hours have been donated by GTR employees.

- There is no standardised level or system of impact measurement that social enterprises use.
- Different organisations prefer to measure different things, with varying definitions of terms and what constitutes successful intervention.
- This is a huge problem in the UK faced by all social enterprises who often have to deal with potentially intangible and difficult to measure impact.
- Research published by Almeida and Cho cites multiple problems encountered when attempting to measure returns to investments in on-the-job training and that few surveys can accurately measure the cost of training.

- Providing incentives for private and public employers to volunteer their expertise and partnership.
- Social enterprises often sell their services to the private sector as part of a recruitment effort that will entice young people to join that sector and fill in the employment gaps that are being widely seen and forecasted.
- The most recent assessments in the UK have revealed that 63% of UK organisations are presently experiencing skills shortages with 68% of employers reporting an inability to find suitable candidates for vacant roles.
- It is key to connect the interests of employers with the interests of potential employees.

- Offering one to one mentorship to act as a responsible guide for young people who lack direction and require tailored and considered attention .
- Listening to young people, understanding their circumstances and taking their preferences into account.

- Providing accredited and recognised qualifications that enable participants to feel like they walked away with a tangible achievement .
- Inspiring young people by exposing them to challenges and a variety of sectors and experiences.
- Building up informal workplace skills such as teamwork, communication and leadership.
- Using all or several of the above to build the confidence of young people in their own abilities and potential.

- Conclusive remarks;
- The nation we inhabit is not the same one that our parents grew up in.
- The cost of living in the UK is significantly higher than it was even 20 years ago.
- The prospect of owning a home seems impossibly distant even for many university graduates, and with each year the cost of transport and energy climbs higher.
- With Brexit on the horizon, the UK will be facing a lot of uncertainty.
- The resulting economic turbulence will negatively impact young people looking to make sense of the changing labour market.
- This uncertainty means it is more important than ever to remember the best approaches to upskilling and training a workforce.

- **Arigato Gozaimashita**

Thank
You

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