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POLICY BRIEF

SKILLS, CONFIDENCE, AND OPPORTUNITY: STRENGTHENING YOUTH TRANSITIONS TO WORK IN GHANA

- Target Audience: Policymakers responsible for youth employment and labour policy, tertiary education institutions (administrators and career counselling units) youth programme implementers, employers, HR practitioners
- Geographic Focus: Ghana, West and Central Africa



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief presents findings from an evaluation of a three-month online Job and Soft Skills Development Programme implemented in Ghana by Africa ICT Right (Ghana) and BøthOfUs (Sweden) for final-year tertiary students and recent graduates (aged 18–35). The programme offered practical job-readiness and socio-emotional skills support, including CV and LinkedIn profile optimisation, interview preparation, communication, and job-search strategies.

The impact of the programme was assessed using a randomised controlled design among eligible applicants. Survey data collected approximately three months after completion, alongside administrative and qualitative evidence, were used to examine whether the training improved job-search capacity and early labour-market outcomes, including job offers and employment.



KEY MESSAGES

- The programme significantly increased the number of job offers received by unemployed participants, suggesting that job-readiness and socio-emotional skills training can enhance job-search outcomes for young graduates.
- Participants reported a notable improvement in self-efficacy, including increased confidence and greater capacity to carry out job-related tasks.
- Skills training encouraged more selective and strategic job-search behaviours, including improvements in digital profiles, CVs, and communication skills.
- No short-term effects on employment were observed, indicating that job offers may take time to translate into actual employment.



Job-readiness and socio-emotional skills training can enhance job-search outcomes for young graduates.

INTRODUCTON

Youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge in Ghana. Nearly one in five young people is available for work but unable to find it (Ghana Statistical Service, 2024), with unemployment among those aged 15–24 rising to 32.8%. This highlights persistent difficulties in the school-to-work transition. Evidence indicates that unemployment is not solely due to a lack of jobs but also reflects limited knowledge of effective job-search strategies (Carranza et al., 2022;

Abebe et al., 2021; Bassi & Nansamba, 2021).

Employers and practitioners frequently report gaps in soft skills and job readiness among graduates. Many young people lack effective communication, teamwork, confidence, professionalism, and practical skills necessary to navigate recruitment processes, including CV preparation, interviewing, and understanding workplace norms. While digital technologies and online platforms can mitigate labour-market frictions, effective use requires technical, socio-emotional, and job-readiness skills. Without these, the returns to academic training are weakened, and school-to-work transitions are hindered.

This study evaluates a pilot job-readiness and skills-training programme in Ghana to generate evidence for potential scale-up in West and Central Africa. It focuses on three questions: how participation affects labour-market outcomes; improvements in intermediate job-search outcomes and digital skills; and impacts on non-cognitive skills.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation implemented a randomised controlled trial (RCT) in Accra, targeting final-year students and recent graduates aged 18–35. Applicants were randomly offered participation in a twelve-week structured training programme delivered by Africa ICT Right (Ghana) and BøthOfUs (Sweden). The programme aimed to equip participants with business, digital, and career-development skills through weekly sessions on socio-emotional skills, job readiness, and exposure to global online labour-market opportunities. The final sample included 100 eligible applicants, with 30 randomly assigned to the training and 70 not offered participation.

Data were collected through a baseline survey before the training and an endline survey approximately three months after completion. Qualitative interviews explored how participants applied the skills learned, while administrative programme data complemented survey findings to provide a comprehensive view of the programme's impact.

FINDINGS

The evaluation showed that the programme strengthened participants' skills, confidence, and job-search strategies, even though short-term employment effects were not observed.

Key insights include:

- **Job offers:** Unemployed beneficiaries reported approximately 2.2 more job offers than the comparison group, suggesting improved success in converting job-search efforts into opportunities.
- **Self-efficacy:** The programme led to a significant increase in self-efficacy of around 1.7 points, a 5% improvement over the comparison group mean.
- **Short-term employment:** No significant impacts on employment were observed three months after the programme, with qualitative evidence indicating constraints such as commuting distances limited job take-up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the programme did not generate immediate employment effects, it successfully improved self-efficacy, professional confidence, and job-search behaviours. Key recommendations are:

- **Integrate job-readiness and socio-emotional skills into tertiary curricula:** Include practical modules on communication, professionalism, CV/interview preparation, and job-search strategies.
- **Embed skills training in youth programmes:** Emphasise socio-emotional skills alongside technical training in initiatives such as the National Service Scheme.
- **Complement digital portals with guided support:** Offer structured sessions on creating job profiles, employer outreach, and interview preparation to enhance the effective use of



Participants increased in confidence level and gained greater capacity to carry out job-related tasks.

platforms such as the Youth Employment Agency portal and other private job platforms.

CONCLUSION

This brief presents evidence from a randomised pilot evaluation of a short, online job-readiness programme for educated youth in Ghana. While no short-term labour-market impacts were observed, the programme significantly improved intermediate outcomes, including self-efficacy and the number of job offers received. Qualitative evidence suggests the programme influenced participants' approach to job search and professional engagement.

The findings highlight that youth unemployment in Ghana is driven not only by limited job creation but also by gaps in digital, socio-emotional, and job-readiness skills. Integrating socio-emotional skills into tertiary education and youth programmes, alongside guided support for digital job platforms, is likely essential to improving longer-term labour-market outcomes for young people.

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Researchers

*Monica P. Lambon-Quayefio, Department of Economics, University of Ghana (mplambon-quayefio@ug.edu.gh)

Rafael Novella, MIDE Development (rnovella@midedevelopment.com)

Richard Freund, MIDE Development (rfreund@midedevelopment.com)

*Corresponding Author

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(vquartey@ug.edu.gh; +233 244 766492)