EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH SPORTS

ACTIVE LIFE CLUB

BME YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

BY ACTIVE LIFE CLUB RESEARCH GROUP

GOVANHILL, GLASGOW

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SUMMARY REPORT

BME Youth Unemployment: a Fresh Perspective

This report is the outcome of a research collaboration between two university researchers and members of Active Life Club, Govanhill, Glasgow, with everyone giving their time voluntarily. Active Life Club (ALC) has provided leisure, networking, training and lobbying opportunities to young people in the south side of Glasgow since 1999. The research was conducted between November 2010 and September 2011, and was launched in March 2012.

The group decided to embark on a research project as a way for ALC members to learn about research methods. A Participatory Action Research project was devised that aimed to explore young peoples' experiences of school, college and university work experience placements.

Research group meeting

A developmental aspect aimed to discover ways in which engaging in the research process and exploring this issue could help ALC members with their own circumstances.

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This summary and the full research report are available at: www.activelifeclub.wordpress.com

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Research questions

The research questions developed through the project were:

- How do young Scottish Pakistani people in Glasgow enhance their employability through work experience placements and broader activities?
- What can make some of these young people feel ‘ stuck ’ whilst going through this process?
- What is it about the experiences of Scottish Pakistani young people which can make them think it is their own fault if they cannot find work experience placements or meaningful employment?

Research methods

The research design helped the young people formulate a research project that would address these questions, empowering them to critically understand an aspect of youth unemployment – an issue which directly concerned the group. Through interviewing others and sharing their own experiences, the research interrogated perceptions which challenged the idea that it was somehow their own fault for being in this position, and helped identify ways in which young people in a similar situation might be helped.

The research had several interlinking strands: twelve interviews, case studies of the experiences of research group members, and a developmental process. Interviewees ranged between ages 16 and 22 and were mainly male. Almost all were Scottish Pakistani and almost all had grown up in Govanhill.

The case studies drew on past and current experiences of the research group members and their attempts to find work experience placements. Discussion, observation and activities all contributed to drawing out this data.

Alongside this, the researchers supported group members in a number of activities such as helping find a work placement, enhancing CVs and accompanying them to events.

Research team in action

Research findings

Building professional networks for young people

When young people such as those in this study need to find work experience at school and work placements at university, they tend to rely heavily on the systems provided by schools and universities to help them to find opportunities. However this does not work reliably. The research highlights how some young people do not have professional contacts to help them secure work opportunities relevant to their courses or desired careers. **The study demonstrates the beneficial role that community leaders can play in providing knowledge of the 'system' and providing links for young people without pre-existing professional networks**.

Filling in support gaps for young people

Raza plays a key role as a volunteer in making sure that ALC members don't 'regress' or fall back on familiar or 'safe options'. He helps them to gain rounded experiences as young people that underpin their confidence to access professional opportunities. This work is ongoing and multifaceted. **Many more adults could take on a 'critical mentoring' role for young people in disadvantaged communities.**

Boosting recognition for work experience in family businesses

Although young people may hold a wide range of responsibilities in a family business, they may place a higher value on short, fixed-term work experience in a 'mainstream' company. The underplaying of family work experience may disproportionately affect the Scottish Pakistani community. **The substantial work experience that some young people get within family businesses could be valued more strongly, with institutional recognition**.

Challenges to the individualised model of career guidance

The current individualised model of career guidance and the transfer of the pressures of applying for jobs to an earlier stage in the form of placements, internships and work experience, increases the burden on people at a younger age. The research process gave young people a chance to appreciate their own situation within the context of others. **By helping young people understand the context of their efforts to find work experience, the pressure on them individually may be reduced, and the real barriers may be addressed strategically by institutions.**