

Assessment of Employability Skills in Uganda's Schools: Challenges and the Way Forward

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Abstract

In today's volatile labour market, employers look beyond academic achievement when considering job applicants. However, since Uganda's school curriculum is configured to cater for the academic achievements of learners, many graduates fall short of employers' expectations. The issue that graduates lack Employability Skills (ES) pertinent in the contemporary labour market is hardly new, and stakeholders are incessantly advocating for mainstreaming ES in the national curriculum. While this advocacy is timely, the matter of how ES can be assessed and measured is muted. Yet the effectiveness of teaching and learning of ES is best inferred

from the effectiveness of their assessment. This paper draws stakeholders' attention to such obtrusive but muffled matter that is key to the successful mainstreaming of ES in the national curriculum. We conclude that to meet today's labour market demands, Uganda's schools need to shift the assessment strategies towards measuring ES, now prized in a complex global environment. Since the outcomes of assessing cognitive skills have had an important influence on policy, the assessment of and for learning ES will attract attention and support of policymakers in developing ES in the school system.

Key words: Employability skills, Assessment of employability skills, Labour market, Labor market needs.

Introduction

Today, educators, employers, parents, government, and civil society express concern over the inability of the education system to adequately prepare young people for work. While the employability of school graduates is one of the most important success factors of an education system, most graduates leave schools without the skills and attribute that employers need (The Observer, February 17, 2018; Daily Monitor, Wednesday June 7, 2017). With Uganda's unemployment rate at near 83%, the government is challenged by the swelling numbers of unemployed graduates (Paulat, 2014). Employers too lament that graduates are not employable. So Uganda is plagued with a horde of workers without jobs and jobs without workers. While personal circumstances and appropriate level qualifications are vital in making the transition from school to work (Impetus, 2014), employability skills and competencies are paramount when it comes to making young people employable. It does no longer suffice to have academic credentials as the total of a young person's education. Graduates need ES to increase their chances of being relevant to society (Lucas & Hanson, 2016).

Nevertheless, if ES is to be valued and taken more seriously in Uganda's education system, there is a need to pay due attention to how these skills can be assessed and measured in schools. The value of teaching and developing ES only becomes evident when the outcomes are clearly visible. In this analytical paper, we draw the attention of Uganda's educators to the need to reconfigure assessment methods from gauging students' acquisition of knowledge and skills to gauging the array of skills prized in today's changing and complex world. Since traditional assessment approaches cannot refine current uncertainties and rapid swings in today's labour market, it is critical that educators design assessment approaches capable of capturing the skills the contemporary workforce needs to exhibit in an increasingly versatile labour market. We, therefore, analyse the changing labour market demands, nature of employability skills, need to assess employability skills, criteria for selecting approaches of assessing ES, challenges of assessing employability skills in Uganda, the way forward.

Changing labour market needs

After completing schooling, young people face higher expectations from employers that they are work-ready and greater competition for work from older, perhaps more qualified workers. Once in employment, a growing number of employers have a changed sense of what they most desire from their employees. Today's labour market places much greater value on the ability of workers to be personally effective in applying their knowledge and skills in new situations (Joint Dialogue, 2018). Considered collectively, no prior generation has ever entered the labour market with more years of schooling, higher levels of qualification or more significant human capital to their names, and yet mounting evidence shows them struggling to compete for employment opportunities (Education and Employers, 2017 in Joint Dialogue, 2018).

The 21st century epitomises a wave of uncertainty that has caused a considerable shift in the global perception of work, employment, career, and education. Perception of work is shifting from work as a career for life to work as a changing career. The aim of education is shifting from focusing on students' employment to their employability (Johnston & Watson, 2006 in Su Ya-hui & Li-yia, 2008). Assessment is shifting from testing how much knowledge skills and disposition students have acquired in school to the ability to demonstrate their readiness to work (Deloitte, 2010). Thus, as the global shift toward Employability Skill (ES) intensifies, its time Uganda paid due attention to how these skills are developed and assessed in schools (Care and Vista, 2017).

This is critical for a country that takes education as a means to transform society from an agrarian to a modern and prosperous economy in the next 20 years (Uganda Vision 2040).

With a growing emphasis on ES in times of uncertain change, it is imperative that Uganda's schools re-consider the development and assessment of students' learning achievement from the standpoint of lifelong learning. This is due to the recognition that what constitutes graduate attributes needed to be employable has changed (Su Ya-hui & Li-yia, 2008). So, if education is to catapult Uganda to middle-income status in the foreseeable future, education institutions need to go beyond stimulating intellectual learning to fostering student employability development with greater emphasis on how these skills can be assessed and measured in schools (Tomlinson, 2008; Tymon, 2013). Sheer possession of academic credentials in terms of knowledge and skills is no longer sufficient for school leavers to be employable (Rayner & Papakonstantinou, 2015). Thus, in this period of global economic uncertainty, understanding what makes young people employable and how it can be developed is critical.

Empirical evidence shows that to be employable in today's labour market, school leavers must be able to work autonomously, be self-motivating and self-monitoring, engage in lifelong learning, adapt to new work environments, communicate using a variety of avenues, interact effectively with others from diverse cultures and work remotely in virtual teams (Mann, and Huddleston, 2016; Blades, Fauth and Gibb, 2012). This set of cognitive and affective capabilities (Yen Wang, 2008; Deloitte, 2010; National Academy of Sciences, 2011) are categorised by Money, Nixon, Tracy, Hennessy, Ball and Dinning (2017) and Yorke and Knight (2006) into personal, core and process skills; and by Joint Dialogue (2018) and Edge Foundation (2018) as foundational, personal, people, creative and problem-solving skills as well as personal qualities and attitudes. Regrettably, these are the very skills and competencies that Uganda's school leavers seem to be lacking.

Nature of Employability Skills (ES)

Previously, employability skills were considered to be primarily of a vocational or job-specific nature and were not believed to include academic skills commonly taught in Uganda's schools. Current thinking, however, has widened the definition of ES to include foundational academic skills as well as a variety of attitudes, values, and habits (Saterfiel & McLarty, 1995 cited in Deloitte, 2010). Foundational skills are skills that relate to communication, personal and interpersonal relationships, problem-solving and management of organisational processes (Blades,

Fauth & Gibb, 2012 citing Lankard, 1990). As foundational skills in nature, ES are valued because they apply to all jobs and can support standard preparation to meet a variety of occupational needs (Blades, Fauth & Gibb, 2012). In this regard, the term ES are the skills required to acquire, retain and change a job. Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2017) construe ES as an array of generic competencies students need to think critically and reason logically to be able to meet the challenges of today's volatile labour market. Accordingly, Watanabe-Crockett (2016) outlines the critical employability skills every child needs as problem-solving, creativity, analytic thinking, collaboration, communication, ethics, action, and accountability. This list of skills is purposefully embedded within Watanabe-Crockett's essential fluencies classified as:

Problem-Solving is the ability to solve complex problems effectively in real-time using unique and carefully designed solutions. As Uganda advances, so will the complexity of its manageable conflicts. The more schools focus on students' ability to solve real-world problems; the more adept students will become in solving problems. Adept problem-solvers work independently of closer supervision, take the initiative, enjoy risk-taking and are not afraid to make mistakes. They learn from mistakes by habitually examining processes to create more efficient solutions (Lai & Viering, 2015; Blades, Fauth & Gibb, 2012).

Creativity is a vital ability that inspires young people to see who they are, what they can do and to realise what they can accomplish. As they face interesting challenges, students need to learn how to figure out how to meet challenges with ingenuity and vision. Creativity allows students to shine forth in their learning. Creative learners are natural producers and consumers of information and problem-solving comes naturally to them since it goes hand in hand with proper engagement in learning through rewarding projects and meaningful tasks that give learners challenges to overcome in imaginative ways (Lai & Viering, 2015).

Analytic thinking is the ability to use higher-order thinking skills such as proficiency in comparing, contrasting, evaluating, synthesising and applying without instruction or close supervision. Analytical thinking enables young people to view data and information in multiple dimensions and from different perspectives. Students will become adept at conceptualisation, organisation, classification and knowledge synthesis. Such skills allow students to deal practically with problems of a social, mathematical and scientific nature. Analytical thinking skills empower learners to make level-headed decisions in their lives and relationships (Deloitte, 2010).

Collaboration is the ability to cooperate effortlessly in physical and virtual spaces with real and virtual global partners. Collaboration skills are essential because, in today's digital age, young people are social by nature. They can text, post, update, share, chat and constantly co-create with each other in technological environments. This implies that a school environment that denies children the chance to collaborate encourages them to disengage from learning. Connection and collaboration with others are essential not only for students' learning but also for their mental and emotional health (Stuart, 2018).

Communication incorporates multi-faceted levels of interaction and sharing information. Today, young people must be able to communicate not just with text or speech but also in multiple multimedia formats. Much as they love to communicate using technology, young people must be taught that responsible communication practice can promote their best representation of who they are as individuals in every relationship and alliance they make in their lives. Whether interfacing, blogging, texting or creating a visual product, one's values and beliefs are defined by how well one communicates with others. So encouraging students to develop and refine every aspect of their communication skills serves them well in their personal and professional lives (Watanabe-Crockett, 2016).

Besides, Thoughtful Learning (2018) singles out ethics, action, adaptability, fiscal responsibility, personal accountability, environmental awareness, empathy, tolerance and global awareness as crucial employability skills. According to Lucas and Hanson (2016), employability habits include self-belief, self-control, perseverance, resilience, curiosity, empathy, creativity and craftsmanship. They also suggest transferable skills like communication, time management, self-management, problem-solving, team working, giving and receiving feedback. Besides, well-rounded and responsible young people need to practice personal, environmental, global and virtual responsibilities geared towards creating a better world for everyone (Stuart, 2018). So, to catapult Uganda into a middle-income status in the foreseeable future, schools need to guide learners into becoming selfless, helpful and caring citizens respectful of each other's cultures and belief systems. Students should also embrace global awareness and online safety (Thoughtful Learning, 2018). Promotion of ES in schools must thus emphasise students' operational skills and expertise other than the accumulation of knowledge. Likewise, assessment of and for learning must focus on students' abilities and competencies other than on whether or not a student gives a correct response (The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007).

Need to assess employability skills in Uganda's education system

If ES and their accompanying transferable skills are really to be valued, a better way of tracking their development must be devised. The value of teaching and developing ES only becomes evident when the outcomes are clearly visible. Visible outcomes, however, does not only mean more young people finishing employability training programs, or even getting jobs. More importantly, it means explicit assessment, measurement and tracking of ES during the entire education process, and not just at the end. Until teachers and students get to understand how they are progressing in the teaching and learning of ES respectively, these complex skills will not be fully prized or entrenched into Uganda's education system (Lucas and Hanson, 2014). Besides, if the assessment of ES leads to greater clarity about their composition, it does not only become easier to improve their teaching, it also brings employers and other stakeholders on board about the development of these skills. Finally, some research shows that just as cognitive skills measurement outcomes have a significant impact on policy, a valid assessment for non-cognitive skills is equally significant as a reliable basis for advancing policy in this area (Lucas and Hanson, 2016).

After all, assessment at all levels of education is the arbiter by which the quality of achievement is benchmarked, both nationally and internationally (Broadfoot, 2007) in Lucas and Hanson, 2016). Whether by standardised tests or classroom-based measures, assessment renders learners' thought processes visible. It also enables teachers to adapt teaching strategies that meet students' learning needs. As the global shift in education toward ES takes centre stage, research is focusing on the assessment of these complex skills (Money et al., Cogent Education (2017). So, just like the 20th century assessment focused on refining intelligence and personality, 21st century assessment should focus on refining ES (Care and Vista, 2017).

Assessment systems in Uganda are typified by Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE), Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education examinations, National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) as well as formal and informal classroom assessment. The system is an interlocked web of assessment methods and actions of institutions and individuals involved directly and indirectly in the processes and its results (Allen, Elks, Outhred and Varly, 2016). In keeping with Care and Vista (2017), assessment in Uganda's schools is characterised by students shuffling papers, filling in short answers to questions, responding to multiple-choice style options or writing essays. Students engage their cognitive effort, anxiously

searching their memory for correct responses to test items or correct formulae to problems. Uganda's assessment methods thus target and promotes information storage and retrieval skills upon demand.

Such assessment approaches are discordant with ES because they do not gauge how well students apply what they know to new situations or how students might use technologies to solve problems or communicate ideas. Secondly, while teachers and schools are motivated to modify their practice based on standardised test data, these tests are not designed to help teachers make decisions about how to target their daily instruction. Thirdly, the current testing system is hardly designed to measure learning value-added from a student's first to the last day in a school (Fisher, 2018). The discordancy between assessment methods and development of ES warrants a shift from measuring discrete knowledge to measuring the ability to think critically, examine problems, gather information, and make informed and reasoned decisions while using technology (The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007).

Accordingly, Su Ya-hui and Li-yia (2008) counsel that assessment of student attributes should shift from focusing on solid representations to focus on related and fluid interpretations built upon relationships rather than on sheer knowledge, skills and dispositions appreciated for their own sake. The central task of assessment should then shift to how well students can use these relationships and relate them to changing contexts as a way of being with the contexts. It is not about how much knowledge, skills and dispositions graduates possess; it is about their ability to apply the knowledge, skills and dispositions in various situations in dynamic and useful ways. Su Ya-hui and Feng Li-yia (2008) consider it as a practical mistake to take knowledge, skills and dispositions as the ultimate objective of the assessment. What matters is the significance of holding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions as a whole through student engagement (Money et al., 2017).

The pressure is thus, mounting from employers, educators, parents and policymakers in Uganda as they question assessment modes that measure students' ability to recall discrete facts other than the ability to handle complex thinking and problem-solving tasks (The Observer, February 17, 2018; Daily Monitor, Wednesday June 7, 2017). Stakeholders fault current assessment for the widening gap between knowledge, skills and dispositions students acquire in schools and what they need to succeed in today's volatile workplace (Ridgeway, McCusker & Pead, 2004). So, while current assessment focuses on the acquisition of subject content, employers

prefer skills relevant in today's labour market (Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011). Thus, the current impetus to assess ES largely results from concerns about the country's ability to compete in the global economy.

Assessment of employability skills

Assessment is often discussed with reference to summative and formative assessment. Summative Assessment (SA) is given at the end of an instructional unit or period. Its purpose is to provide accountability and to measure how schools are progressing in terms of achieving intended competencies in learners (Laily & SitiEshah, 2018). Summative assessment is used when it is important to monitor learners' achievements against externally agreed standards, to determine students' routes on to their next level of the education system, or to provide information for accountability or program evaluation (Lucas & Hanson, 2016). By contrast, FA occurs during instruction using activities ranging from performance tasks to thoughtful and thorough conversations between teachers and students (Laily & SitiEshah, 2018; The Partnership for the 21stSkills, 2007). FA provides feedback to learners and develops their understanding of their achievements. It helps them understand the gap between their current and desired levels of performance, and how they can improve towards the desired level to close the gap (Lucas & Hanson, 2016). The difference between SA and FA is dubbed as an assessment of learning and assessment for learning respectively (Fisher, 2015 citing Wiliam, 2011).

A successful SE of ES produces information that is useful, valid, reliable and fair so that it can be used to inform curricular or policy decisions. Effective SE: provides useful information about student achievement by measuring their comprehension, absorption and application of higher-order concepts; is tied to previously establish learning goals for the teaching unit; measures what it is supposed to measure, and is free of ambiguity; provides student scores that are not affected by arbitrary factors; gives the same chance of success to all students and; is administered widely in all parts of the country to allow educators make comparisons within and between successively larger populations of students (Laily & SitiEshah, 2018; Fisher, 2015; The Partnership for the 21st Skills, 2007).

Effective FA of ES: focuses on standard core subjects, global awareness, civic literacy, and skills, such as ICT literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving, and life skills; makes thinking visible by revealing conceptual strategies a student uses to solve a problem; must be able to measure or observe a student's mastery along several different axes; is structured so that educators

can identify the background knowledge a student used to solve each problem in real-time; is largely performance-based and authentic by making tasks mirror real-world situations as much as possible so that students gain the valuable training they need for success in their future endeavours; and generates data that can be used to directly inform instructional practices to enable teachers adapt teaching to meet students' needs (Laily & SitiEshah, 2018; The Partnership for the 21st Skills, 2007).

Furthermore, effective FA of ES aims at building capacity for both teachers and students to integrate skills, knowledge and dispositions into students' in order to build pedagogical methods and student ability; is comprehensive and ongoing since students' thought constructs are continually changing; enables students see improvements in their skills and strategies as well as knowledge transfer to parallel or related problems; and reflects understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated and revealed in performance over time to enable students focus on learning and integrating skills to allow them to conceptualise and think about problems other than diverting focus to procedures and answers (Laily & SitiEshah, 2018; The Partnership for the 21st Skills, 2007).

Besides, effective assessment of ES requires that feedback information comes from teachers, learners' self-assessment or peer assessment. Sadler (1989) asserts that learners need information on what they have done well and what is good about it. They also need information about what needs to be improved and how to improve it. Furthermore, students need to know the goals they are working towards. When students become involved in the assessment process, assessment for learning begins to look more like teaching and less like testing (García-Sanpedro, 2012). Besides, assessment is of many benefits to both teachers and students when viewed under the principles of assessment for learning. Ultimately, it leads to improved performance and efficient service delivery (Wheatley, McInch, Fleming & Lord, 2015).

Heitin (2012) citing Prof. Douglas Fisher and Prof. Nancy Frey of San Diego State University, points out that the most important components of FA are strong feedback and feedforward. Good feedback is timely, specific, actionable and useful. It gives students opportunities to re-learn and practise the skill again right away. Similarly, teachers should feed-forward by asking themselves how they will use what they learned in the feedback process to inform subsequent instruction. Feedforward helps teachers decide what needs to be taught again

and to whom, which implies flexibility in planning and willingness to turn from whole-class instruction (Wheatley et al., 2015; Rowe, 2018; Gerald and Smith, 2004).

Since feedback is designed to enhance student learning, it is insufficient to provide it at the end of the instruction program, since this simply tells students where they went wrong. To be effective, feedback needs to be a two-way dialogue to motivate students. Students need ongoing formal and informal feedback on their work, both assessed and non-assessed, along with support on how to use it. It is important to make sure students are aware that the teacher is giving them feedback (Gill Ferrell, 2012). Teachers also need to give students the opportunity to give teachers feedback on what students have learned to help teachers determine whether or not the teaching is helping learners to achieve intended outcomes. Where it is not, the teacher can then adapt teaching to students' learning needs (Wheatley et al., 2015). Rowe (2018) thus takes feedback as a continuous process of conversation and reflection.

Criteria for selecting approaches for assessing ES

Saterfiel and McLarty (1995) give three criteria for assessing employability skills. First, the validity of ES assessment rests on the labour market analysis. A clear and validated relationship should exist between the assessment and the skills required in the labour market. This relationship should be based on a systematic analysis of skills and skills requirement. For instance, it is not sufficient to observe that computer literacy is required for the job; one must know which computer packages are required and the type and level of computing skills needed. In this respect, an assessment must mirror the nature of the skills required, and the score attained on it must accurately reflect the students' proficiency level in those skills.

Secondly, the skills assessed should be teachable. Assessment of intrinsic abilities is valuable both for employers attempting to predict future job market performance and for counsellors working with students to identify jobs suited to their interests, values, and self-concepts. Since the essence of ES is preparation for the labour market, the focus of ES assessments should be redirected to those aspects of the relevant skills that can be taught. Since not all ES can be neatly packaged in the traditional academic disciplines, educators must make special efforts to ensure that they teach all the needed ES (Sadler, 1989 in Saterfiel and McLarty, 1995). Finally, each assessment must be evaluated in the context of its purpose. If employers are going to use the scores to make personnel decisions, the ES assessment must meet strict reliability and validity standards, sufficient to provide a sound defense. This requires particular attention to the

psychometric quality of the instrument, to the standardisation of the administration and the accuracy of the scoring. However, if the purpose of the assessment is to guide instruction, relevant psychometric criteria should be more relaxed (Saterfiel and McLarty, 1995).

The advantage of assessments which employers may use for personnel decisions is that the results are of immediate use to examinees in making the transition to the workforce. The advantage of FA is that assessment can be constructed with greater emphasis on providing instructionally relevant experiences to students. It is also essential to recognise that assessment instruments are needed to support the information needs both of school-age students as they enter the workforce and of adults making transitions into, or within, the workforce at later stages in their lives (Sadler, 1989).

Challenges of assessing employability skills in Uganda's education system

Meeting today's labour market demands requires a shift in assessment strategies to measure ES now prized in a complex global environment. But attempts to realign assessment strategies to match these skills are not without challenges. Likely challenges include; lack of universally accepted definitions and progression indicators, the subjective nature of judgments that Wilton (2014) in Lucas and Hanson (2016) takes to being the eyes of the beholder, multiple stakeholders, and the lack of confidence by teachers in their ability to assess students' personal attributes. Thus, developing valid and reliable assessment measures of ES could be quite challenging (Pastore, 2013) endeavour more so for Ugandan educators and curriculum developers.

Besides, there is a challenge of how to proceed from the status quo, where system-level assessment using traditional tests is still deemed a good-enough proxy of academic achievement. In the current system, testing processes are implemented using traditional methods prized as convenient, systematic and cost-effective. Designing new and good-enough proxy measures that make an acquisition of ES unequivocal is a tall order (Rotherham and Willingham, 2013; Saterfiel and McLarty, 1995). Thus, engraining ES in the school system comes with novel assessment approaches that can have vast implications for pedagogy and system-wide learning outcomes. As well, high stakes assessment of core subject areas in Uganda is still a key part of the education system on which policy-makers rely to make reforms. It is thus unlikely that assessment of ES will be given the priority it deserves soon enough (Sadler, 1989).

In addition, since ES is about behaviours rather than outputs, it is less clear what insightful manipulation of students' behaviors can be undertaken. Measuring behavior other than the

products of behavior is quite different from measuring skills such as literacy and numeracy. This poses a challenge of defining behaviour in such a way that it can be measured objectively at large scale. Besides, the complex nature of some ES defies automation (National Academy of Science, 2011). While machines and computers have automated many working tasks and jobs, the skills that we need to develop are themselves complex and non-routine. Skills like self-belief, self-control, perseverance, resilience, curiosity, empathy, creativity, craftsmanship, self-management, problem-solving, team working and giving and receiving feedback are so complex that some are not easy to automate. This renders it difficult to capture them for measurement purposes (Care and Vista, 2017).

Next is difficulty in tracking progression caused by the existence of multiple employability frameworks and lists of ES. Once an attempt is made to assign levels to each of the individual skills to assess progression, the size of the framework is likely to lead to confusion and disengagement by teachers and learners and meaningless to employers (Lai and Viering, 2015; Ferrell, 2012). Lastly, there are systemic contextual challenges typical of Uganda's schools such as very large class size of over 100 pupils per class, inadequate facilities and instructional technology, an overloaded curriculum, and ill-trained and poorly motivated teaching force. From the learners' side, there are challenges such as high absenteeism rates, depressing home background, low motivation to study and a demotivating school environment.

Way forward

Since no education system is better than the quality of its teaching force, Fisher (2018) observes that getting ES elements into teachers' current curriculum will require teachers to create professional habits around Replacement Thinking (RT) that can be applied across the curriculum. This means applying RT to instructional strategies, classroom activities, and formative data collection, using all relevant forms. In addition, Fisher outlines four action steps that can bring more contemporary ES relevant ideas into the teachers' professional practices labelled as action steps I to IV highlighted below:

In action step I: Fisher (2018) suggests that instead of thinking of teaching-learning tools first teachers should use the best teaching aids to support learning such as feedback, performance, knowledge, creativity, etc. Teachers need to realise that tools are not the learning objective to support learning. For instance, teachers don't plan to use crayons; crayons are just an always

available option. The same applies to Computer Labs and Digital Devices. They are tools in a classroom toolbox and are always available.

In action step II: Fisher (2018) advises that students need to be given an authentic choice in how they will demonstrate their learning. Part of the teacher's duty is taking what is known about good instruction and apply it to the contemporary child. Teachers need to appreciate that children think and perform differently and have unique experiences and different ideas around what engages them. A teacher's key task is to seek out ways to develop a child's unique skills and perspectives to engage the child. This means offering choices in learning products, particularly if those products can be created in the myriad tools available as long as the task is valued over the tool.

In Action step III: Fisher (2018) urges teachers to encourage students to seek feedback from other students, other educators and experts in the field. According to Fisher, feedback is more powerful than grades and thus, teachers should let students learn to amplify by nurturing them without grading them. Teachers should offer feedback about students' work in the form of conversations, questions, and constructive criticism. Teachers may also display unfinished drafts of students' learning products and solicit learning feedback from multiple audiences. Besides, teachers should habitually amplify a student's work from the classroom to the world and seek perspective analysis from other students, educators, and experts in the field. Furthermore, teachers should encourage students to consider suggestions and improve their work (Care and Vista, 2017a; Blades, Fauth and Gibb, 2012). While this may raise issues concerning authenticity and work worth doing; there is a need to remember that what is needed is an experience that makes students inquisitors who are ready to solve unique problems.

In action step IV: Fisher (2018) suggests that at all times, access and equity of access should be a priority cornerstone in the contemporary classroom. Access to print and digital resources is essential. Children don't need to come to school as vessels to fill up with the knowledge that they can look upon the Internet by themselves. The school needs to be a place where knowledge is evaluated. The teacher's task then is to help students learn to take what is now ubiquitous knowledge, learn to filter it for relevance and quality, and use it to learn, grow, and demonstrate skills such as communication, collaboration, creative problem solving among others (Care and Vista, 2017b).

Fischer (2018) however warns that the four action steps above can only be taken in a learning environment of unlimited access to all forms of knowledge. This means having real

conversations about what teachers filter in schools and by reflecting on their mission as to whether its transfer knowledge; teaching students to think; instil a passion for attaining goals; accumulation of torpid facts; acquiring a toolbox of opportunities that allows them to solve unique problems. So, ES instructional practise is about letting go of past ideals, while contemporary curriculum design is about inviting students to the design table and to co-create the learning experience. In other words, what Uganda's education system needs is a learning environment where ES tools and practices can enhance the lesson, other than being the lesson itself (Care and Vista, 2017c; Ferrell, 2012).

According to Lucas and Hanson (2016), insight into the wide range of assessment methods that might be used to record and track progress in ES can be gathered from earlier initiatives that sought to develop skills and dispositions in individual learners. The two scholars cite Facer and Pykett (2007) who mapped over twenty initiatives promoting the development of personal skills and competencies. This development was against a framework whose aim was to develop a shared language for explicitly valuing ES to help teachers recognise them when they see them. Its other aim was to help teachers move from a situation where ES was implicitly nurtured to one where they were overtly recognised and discussed with learners.

Listing the skills, rather than develop another framework, Facer and Pykett (2007) explored how ES might be better aligned with the National Curriculum at that time. The two researchers identified ten principles that were important in assessing personal skills. According to Facer and Pykett (2007) in Lucas and Hanson (2016), assessment of ES should: be integrated into learning processes; be sensitive to context and complexity; promote self-worth and development; be meaningful to and owned by learners; act as a bridge and currency between learners and diverse communities; enable multiple comparisons and lenses; recognise collaboration; be flexible and evolutionary; be responsive to changing context/knowledge and subject domains; be manageable by students and teachers.

Lucas and Hanson (2016) still consider Facer and Pykett's (2007) advice about the most appropriate methods to assess ES still relevant today. In keeping with Fisher (2018) action steps, Lucas and Hanson (2016) concur with Facer and Pykett (2007) that acquisition of ES requires new relationships between teachers and students, a greater focus upon personal development, progress against individual goals and an increased emphasis upon formative personalised assessment practices.

In addition, Lucas and Claxton (2009) offer specific assessment methods appropriate for assessing ES in their review of skills frameworks for the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts. The methods include self-report questionnaires; evaluation of students' learning portfolios or diaries, or other written reflections; structured teacher observation in terms of quasi-objective ladders of progression for each of the wider skills; learning stories: short vignettes and digital photos or videos that capture a series of increasingly accomplished leading-edge moments in individual students' learning careers; periodic 360-degree assessments of student progress drawing on testimony from parents, friends, teachers and coaches, as well as documentary evidence of various kinds; and dynamic assessment of young people's performance in novel, demanding learning situations (Lucas and Hanson, 2016).

Finally, the use of technology to support recording and assessing of ES offers can merge delivery and teaching of the skills with tracking progression, sharing evidence and grading achievements. Besides, technology can provide more accurate methods for attainment a real-world picture of student performance (Care and Vista, 2017a). The exceptional level of detail that can be achieved in assessing and tracking skills progression using digital technology has been illustrated in the assessment of collaborative problem-solving (Blades, Fauth and Gibb, 2012; Care et al., 2015 in Lucas and Hanson, 2016). In response to the call from employers to make the employability skills of students more visible, Institutions of Higher Learning are turning to e-portfolios to encourage students to gather evidence of and reflect on their ES (Mann and Huddleston, 2016; Lucas and Hanson, 2016).

Conclusion

We conclude that if ES is certainly to be prized in Uganda's education system; there is a need to devise ways of tracking their development. In this regard, if the education system is to meet today's labour market demands, there is a need to embrace a shift in assessment strategies towards measuring ES now prized in a complex global environment. If the assessment of ES leads to greater clarity about their composition, it will become easier to improve their teaching and learning in schools. Since outcomes of measuring cognitive skills have had an important influence on policy, an equivalent valid measure for ES will attract attention and support of policymakers in developing ES. Nevertheless, given the challenges of assessing ES in Uganda, there is a need for a concerted effort of all key stakeholders at all levels. It will also necessitate considerable

commitment and the appreciation that the implementation process will not only be gradual, but will as well require multiple cycles of creation, application, and evaluation.

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