

School-Industry Partnership Programmes and Students' Career Preparedness in Secondary Schools in Rivers State

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relationship between school-industry partnership programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions, and two corresponding null hypotheses. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 5,833 teachers in 320 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 1,167 teachers, representing 20% of the population, was selected using stratified random sampling based on the three Senatorial Districts of the State. Data were collected using two researcher-developed instruments titled School-Industry Partnership Programmes Scale (SIPPS) and Students' Career Preparedness Scale (SCPS). The instruments were validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, while reliability coefficients of 0.86 and 0.84 respectively were obtained using Cronbach Alpha. Out of 1,167 copies of the questionnaire administered, 1,032 valid copies were used for analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions, while the associated t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that workplace exposure programmes ($r = 0.621$, $p < 0.05$) and industry mentorship programmes ($r = 0.684$, $p < 0.05$) had strong positive and significant relationships with students' career preparedness. The study concluded that school-industry partnership programmes significantly enhance students' career preparedness. It was recommended that schools strengthen workplace exposure opportunities and institutionalize industry mentorship programmes to improve students' readiness for future careers.*

Keywords: *School-Industry Partnership Programmes, Workplace Exposure Programmes, Industry Mentorship Programmes, Career Preparedness, Secondary Schools.*

Introduction

Career preparedness has become a major concern in contemporary education as societies increasingly demand graduates who possess not only academic knowledge but also practical workplace competencies required for successful transition into employment. The rapidly changing nature of work, technological advancement, globalization, digital transformation, and evolving labour market expectations have heightened the need for educational systems to equip students with employability skills, career awareness, workplace experiences, and professional competencies before graduation. Secondary schools are therefore expected to prepare students adequately for future careers through programmes that bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace realities (Lent & Brown, 2024). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2024), career preparedness refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, experiences, and competencies

that enable learners to make informed career decisions and successfully navigate future employment opportunities. Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) defined career preparedness as students' readiness to transition from school to work through the development of career awareness, employability skills, adaptability, and workplace competencies. Lent and Brown (2024) further emphasized that career preparedness encompasses career self-efficacy, occupational knowledge, and the confidence needed to pursue and sustain career goals. In the context of this study, students' career preparedness refers to the extent to which secondary school students possess the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences necessary to make career choices and succeed in future employment.

The importance of career preparedness cannot be overstated because it significantly influences students' employability, career decision-making, workforce adaptability, and long-term professional success. Students who are adequately prepared for careers are more likely to possess self-confidence, occupational awareness, communication skills, teamwork abilities, and problem-solving competencies that are highly valued by employers. According to the World Economic Forum (2025), employers increasingly seek individuals who demonstrate adaptability, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and workplace readiness. Likewise, OECD (2023) maintained that career preparedness enhances students' ability to transition successfully from school to employment and contributes to sustainable workforce development. Succi and Canovi (2024) observed that career readiness promotes the acquisition of soft skills that improve employability outcomes, while McGunagle and Zizka (2023) noted that career-prepared individuals demonstrate greater resilience and adaptability in dynamic labour markets. Students who develop career preparedness are often better positioned to identify career opportunities, set realistic career goals, and compete effectively in the labour market (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2024; ILO, 2024).

Furthermore, career preparedness promotes informed career decision-making, occupational competence, self-efficacy, and workforce readiness among students. It equips learners with the ability to understand workplace expectations, adapt to changing job environments, and apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. Indicators of career preparedness include career awareness, employability skills, workplace competence, career decision-making ability, professional attitudes, and job readiness (Tomlinson, 2023; Clarke, 2024). UNESCO (2024) observed that students who participate in career-oriented educational programmes demonstrate higher levels of career readiness and employment confidence. Similarly, Jackson and Bridgstock (2024) argued that effective career preparation programmes improve students' transition outcomes and long-term employability prospects. Bridgstock (2023) further maintained that career preparedness equips learners with lifelong career management competencies required in increasingly uncertain labour markets. Consequently, educational institutions are increasingly exploring collaborative approaches that expose learners to real-world work environments and professional experiences.

Partnership is generally viewed as a collaborative relationship between two or more entities that work together to achieve shared goals and mutual benefits. According to Epstein (2022), partnership involves cooperative efforts among stakeholders who contribute resources, expertise, and support toward the achievement of common objectives. Likewise, Sanders and Sheldon (2023) defined partnership as a structured relationship established to facilitate cooperation, resource sharing, and joint problem-solving. Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2024) viewed partnership as an inter-organizational arrangement that promotes collective action and mutual value creation among participating institutions. Similarly, Ansell and Torfing (2023) argued that partnerships represent strategic collaborative governance mechanisms through which organizations address complex social and developmental challenges. Within the educational context, partnerships often involve collaboration between schools and external organizations to enhance learning outcomes and prepare students for future challenges.

School-industry partnership programmes refer to organized collaborative initiatives between educational institutions and industries aimed at providing students with practical exposure, workplace experiences, mentorship opportunities, and career-related learning experiences. Such programmes enable schools and industries to work together in developing students' career competencies, occupational awareness, and employability skills (OECD, 2023). According to UNESCO (2024), school-industry partnerships involve structured cooperation between schools and employers to facilitate career development, workplace

learning, and workforce preparation among students. Similarly, Jackson and Bridgstock (2024) described school-industry partnership programmes as collaborative arrangements through which industries contribute to students' learning through internships, mentorship, workplace visits, career talks, and practical training experiences. Billett (2023) further noted that school-industry partnerships create authentic learning environments where students can apply classroom knowledge to workplace situations. Likewise, UNESCO-UNEVOC (2024) emphasized that effective partnerships between educational institutions and industries are critical for aligning educational outcomes with labour market needs. In the context of this study, school-industry partnership programmes refer to the collaborative initiatives established between secondary schools and industries to facilitate students' acquisition of career-related knowledge, experiences, and competencies.

The importance of school-industry partnership programmes lies in their ability to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and workplace realities. Through such collaborations, students gain exposure to real work environments, industry expectations, professional practices, and career opportunities. These programmes provide learners with practical experiences that enhance career awareness, employability skills, workplace confidence, and occupational aspirations (Tomlinson, 2023). UNESCO (2024) emphasized that partnerships between educational institutions and industries strengthen career education and improve students' readiness for employment. Likewise, OECD (2023) noted that students who participate in school-industry collaboration programmes often demonstrate higher levels of career preparedness and smoother transitions into the labour market. The European Training Foundation (ETF, 2024) further reported that industry-linked educational experiences enhance students' understanding of workplace requirements and improve employment prospects. Similarly, Cedefop (2024) maintained that work-based learning opportunities contribute significantly to learners' career readiness and professional development.

School-industry partnership programmes may involve several components, including workplace exposure programmes and industry mentorship programmes. These indicators reflect the extent to which schools collaborate with industries to provide students with meaningful career-related experiences and learning opportunities (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2024). According to Tomlinson (2023), effective school-industry partnerships contribute significantly to students' understanding of career pathways and workplace expectations. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) maintained that industry-linked educational programmes enhance students' employability skills and career readiness. Billett (2023) further argued that sustained interaction between students and industry professionals facilitates experiential learning and occupational socialization. UNESCO-UNEVOC (2024) also emphasized that workplace-based learning initiatives enhance students' preparedness for future careers. However, this study focused on workplace exposure programmes and industry mentorship programmes.

Workplace exposure programmes refer to structured activities designed to familiarize students with real work environments, occupational roles, and professional practices. Such programmes may include industrial visits, job shadowing, internship opportunities, career excursions, field trips, and workplace observation experiences. Through workplace exposure, students gain firsthand understanding of industry operations, workplace culture, job requirements, and career opportunities. Researchers have argued that workplace exposure enhances students' career awareness and enables them to make informed career choices (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2024). According to UNESCO (2024), workplace learning experiences provide students with opportunities to connect academic learning with occupational realities and develop practical career competencies. Cedefop (2024) observed that exposure to authentic work settings enhances learners' understanding of occupational demands and career pathways. Similarly, Smith and Yasukawa (2024) found that workplace learning experiences positively influence students' employability skills, confidence, and occupational aspirations. Consequently, workplace exposure programmes may contribute significantly to students' career preparedness.

Industry mentorship programmes, on the other hand, refer to structured guidance and support provided by industry professionals to students with the aim of facilitating career development and professional growth. Mentorship activities may include career counselling sessions, professional coaching, career talks, networking opportunities, skills development workshops, and one-on-one guidance from experienced practitioners. Through mentorship, students gain valuable insights into

career pathways, workplace expectations, professional ethics, and industry trends (Tomlinson, 2023). OECD (2023) observed that mentorship programmes improve students' career confidence, employability skills, and occupational aspirations. Similarly, Jackson and Bridgstock (2024) maintained that industry mentors serve as role models who facilitate students' career planning and readiness for future employment. Allen and Eby (2023) further asserted that mentoring relationships promote professional identity development and career self-efficacy among learners. Likewise, Crisp and Cruz (2024) noted that mentorship programmes positively influence students' educational aspirations and career outcomes. This implies that schools that effectively implement industry mentorship programmes may contribute positively to students' career preparedness.

The increasing complexity of labour markets and the growing demand for employability skills have transformed expectations placed on secondary schools worldwide, including those in Rivers State. Schools are increasingly expected not only to provide academic instruction but also to prepare students for future careers by exposing them to practical workplace experiences and industry expectations. Employers now seek individuals who possess workplace competence, communication skills, teamwork abilities, adaptability, digital literacy, and career awareness. Consequently, school-industry partnership programmes have become important strategies for enhancing students' career preparedness and facilitating successful school-to-work transitions (World Economic Forum, 2025). The International Labour Organization (2024) stressed that stronger collaboration between educational institutions and employers is essential for addressing skills mismatches and improving youth employability. Similarly, the World Bank (2024) emphasized that educational systems must strengthen industry engagement to prepare learners for emerging labour market opportunities.

However, inadequate collaboration between schools and industries, limited funding, insufficient industry participation, poor coordination of partnership activities, lack of mentorship opportunities, and inadequate workplace exposure programmes may hinder students' acquisition of career-related competencies. Such challenges may limit students' understanding of career opportunities and reduce their preparedness for future employment. UNESCO (2024) observed that weak school-industry linkages remain a major challenge affecting career development among learners in many developing countries. Similarly, OECD (2023) noted that insufficient workplace learning opportunities often contribute to gaps in students' career readiness and employability skills. The World Bank (2024) further reported that inadequate institutional support and limited employer involvement constrain effective career development initiatives in schools. Likewise, UNESCO-UNEVOC (2024) identified weak policy implementation and poor stakeholder collaboration as barriers to successful school-industry partnership programmes.

Although several studies have examined career education, employability skills development, vocational training, workplace learning, and school-community collaboration, limited empirical attention appears to have been given to the relationship between school-industry partnership programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. Most existing studies have focused on vocational education, entrepreneurship education, or academic achievement without specifically examining career preparedness as an outcome variable within the context of school-industry partnership initiatives. Donald, Ashleigh, Baruch, and Cerdin (2023) observed that empirical studies on employability have concentrated largely on higher education contexts, leaving significant gaps at the secondary school level. Similarly, Clarke (2024) argued that more context-specific studies are required to understand how educational partnerships influence career readiness outcomes. This apparent gap in literature therefore creates the need for this study on "School-Industry Partnership Programmes and Students' Career Preparedness in Secondary Schools in Rivers State."

Statement of the Problem

The contemporary labour market is increasingly characterized by technological advancement, globalization, changing workplace demands, and intense competition for employment opportunities. Employers no longer seek individuals who possess only academic qualifications; rather, they demand graduates who demonstrate career awareness, practical workplace experience,

communication skills, problem-solving abilities, adaptability, and professional competence. Unfortunately, many secondary school graduates in Rivers State appear to leave school without adequate exposure to the realities of the workplace, resulting in poor career decision-making, unrealistic occupational aspirations, limited employability skills, and insufficient preparedness for future careers. This situation raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of existing school practices in preparing students for the world of work.

Notwithstanding the recognized importance of school-industry partnerships in enhancing career development, observations suggest that many secondary schools in Rivers State operate with minimal collaboration with industries and employers. Students often rely solely on classroom instruction, with limited opportunities for workplace visits, industrial interactions, mentorship programmes, career talks, or practical exposure to occupational environments. Consequently, many students may lack adequate understanding of career pathways, industry expectations, workplace culture, and the competencies required for success in modern occupations. This disconnect between school learning and workplace realities has become a growing concern among educators, employers, parents, and policymakers.

More worrisome is the possibility that students may be making critical career choices based on inadequate information, misconceptions, or societal pressure rather than informed understanding gained through direct industry engagement. If this trend persists, it could contribute to increased skills mismatch, youth unemployment, underemployment, poor career satisfaction, and reduced workforce productivity in the future. Although school-industry partnership programmes have been identified globally as effective mechanisms for enhancing career preparedness, it remains unclear the extent to which such programmes influence students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. This uncertainty therefore necessitates an empirical investigation into the relationship between school-industry partnership programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the global labour market has undergone unprecedented transformation driven by rapid technological advancement, digital disruption, automation, and shifting industry expectations. These changes have redefined the nature of work, placing increasing pressure on education systems to produce graduates who are not only academically sound but also career-ready, adaptable, and industry-responsive. However, there is growing concern that many secondary school students in Rivers State are still being educated in environments that are largely detached from real-world occupational experiences, thereby limiting their exposure to the practical demands of modern careers. Despite the recognized global importance of school-industry collaboration as a bridge between education and employment, evidence suggests that such partnerships remain weak, inconsistent, or poorly implemented in many secondary schools. Students often graduate with minimal understanding of workplace expectations, limited exposure to industries, and little or no engagement with professionals in their fields of interest. This persistent gap between school learning and industry realities raises critical questions about how effectively secondary education is preparing learners for the complexities of contemporary careers.

Even more concerning is the growing incidence of career indecision, unrealistic occupational expectations, and increasing mismatch between students' aspirations and available labour market opportunities. Many students appear to make career choices without adequate guidance, mentorship, or firsthand experience of workplace environments, leading to frustration, unemployment risks, and underutilization of human potential after graduation. The absence or weakness of structured school-industry partnership programmes may therefore be contributing to poor career preparedness among secondary school students. Although international evidence strongly supports the role of workplace exposure and industry mentorship in enhancing career readiness, it remains unclear whether such programmes are meaningfully implemented in secondary schools in Rivers State and

the extent to which they influence students' career preparedness. This gap in empirical knowledge creates a pressing need for systematic investigation into how school-industry partnership programmes relate to students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between school-industry partnership programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational survey research design to examine the relationship between school-industry partnership programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. The independent variable of the study was school-industry partnership programmes, while students' career preparedness served as the dependent variable. The population of the study comprised 5,833 teachers in 320 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 1,167 teachers, representing approximately 20% of the population, was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The stratification was based on the three Senatorial Districts of Rivers State to ensure adequate representation of teachers across the study area. Data were collected through two structured questionnaires titled: School-Industry Partnership Programmes Scale (SIPPS) and Students' Career Preparedness Scale (SCPS). The instruments were designed to elicit information on the relationship between school-industry partnership programmes through workplace exposure programmes and industry mentorship programmes, and students' career preparedness. The items of the instruments were structured on a four-point rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD).

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by specialists in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation from recognized universities. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted outside the study area, and the data obtained were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method, which yielded coefficients of 0.86 and 0.84 for SIPPS and SCPS respectively, indicating that the instruments were reliable for the

study. The researcher, with the assistance of three research assistants, administered 1,167 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. At the end of the exercise, 1,081 (93%) copies were retrieved, while 1,032 (88%) copies were found properly completed and suitable for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) to answer the research questions and determine the extent of the relationship between the variables. The corresponding hypotheses were tested using the t-test associated with correlation analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0.

Results and Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Showing the Relationship between Workplace Exposure Programmes and Students' Career Preparedness in Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Variables	N	df	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Workplace Exposure Programmes	1,032				
Students' Career Preparedness	1,032	1,030	0.621	0.000	Strong Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. The result yielded an r-value of 0.621 and a corresponding p-value of 0.000. The coefficient indicates a strong positive relationship between the variables. This implies that schools that regularly organize workplace exposure programmes such as industrial visits, career excursions, job shadowing activities, workplace observations, and field trips are more likely to produce students with higher levels of career preparedness.

The finding suggests that students who are exposed to real work environments tend to develop better understanding of occupational requirements, workplace expectations, career opportunities, and employability skills necessary for future employment.

Therefore, workplace exposure programmes have a strong positive relationship with students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Showing the Relationship between Industry Mentorship Programmes and Students' Career Preparedness in Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Variables	N	df	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Industry Mentorship Programmes	1,032				
Students' Career Preparedness	1,032	1,030	0.684	0.000	Strong Positive Relationship

Table 2 presents the relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. The result produced an r-value of 0.684 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000. This coefficient indicates a strong positive relationship between the variables. The finding suggests that schools that engage students in

mentorship activities involving industry professionals provide learners with valuable opportunities to acquire career knowledge, workplace insights, professional guidance, and practical information about various occupations. The result further implies that students who interact regularly with industry mentors are more likely to develop confidence in career decision-making, realistic career aspirations, employability skills, and readiness for future employment.

Thus, industry mentorship programmes are strongly related to students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (Ho₁): There is no significant relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: Test of Hypothesis on Relationship Between Workplace Exposure Programmes and Students' Career Preparedness

Variables	N	df	r	p-value	alpha	Decision
Workplace Exposure Programmes	1,032					
		1,030	0.621	0.000	0.05	Failed to Accept Ho ₁ (Significant)
Students' Career Preparedness	1,032					

Table 3 reveals that the relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness yielded an r-value of 0.621 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the stipulated alpha level of 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected.

Therefore, there is a significant relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2 (Ho₂): There is no significant relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: Test of Hypothesis on Relationship Between Industry Mentorship Programmes And Students' Career Preparedness

Variables	N	df	r	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Industry Mentorship Programmes	1,032					
		1,030	0.684	0.000	0.05	Failed to Accept Ho ₂ (Significant)
Students' Career Preparedness	1,032					

Table 4 shows that the relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness produced an r-value of 0.684 and a corresponding p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected.

Therefore, there is a significant relationship between industry mentorship programmes and students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of Finding

The first findings of this study revealed that workplace exposure programmes have a strong positive and significant relationship with students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. The analysis showed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.621$ and a p-value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between workplace exposure programmes and students' career preparedness. This finding implies that students who are exposed to workplace environments through industrial visits, job shadowing, career excursions, and workplace observation opportunities tend to develop greater awareness of career options, workplace expectations, and employability skills required for future occupations. The finding corroborates the position of UNESCO (2024) that workplace learning experiences provide students with opportunities to connect classroom learning with occupational realities, thereby enhancing career readiness. The result is also consistent with the findings of Billett (2023) who argued that authentic workplace experiences facilitate experiential learning and occupational competence among learners. Similarly, Smith and Yasukawa (2024) reported that workplace exposure programmes significantly improve students' confidence, career awareness, and understanding of labour market expectations. The finding further aligns with Cedefop (2024), which maintained that workplace-based learning enhances students' preparedness for employment by exposing them to real-world professional environments.

The second finding of the study further found that industry mentorship programmes have a strong positive and significant relationship with students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.684$ and a p-value of 0.000, resulting in the rejection of the second null hypothesis. This finding suggests that students who benefit from guidance, counselling, coaching, and interactions with industry professionals are more likely to develop career confidence, occupational knowledge, realistic career aspirations, and employability competencies. The finding supports the assertion of OECD (2023) that mentorship programmes enhance students' career confidence and facilitate informed career decision-making. It also agrees with Allen and Eby (2023) who observed that mentoring relationships promote professional identity development and career self-efficacy among learners. Likewise, Crisp and Cruz (2024) found that mentorship positively influences students' educational aspirations, career planning, and future occupational outcomes. The finding is equally in agreement with Jackson and Bridgstock (2024) who maintained that industry mentors serve as valuable role models who assist students in understanding workplace realities and preparing effectively for future careers.

Conclusion

The study concluded that school-industry partnership programmes are significant predictors of students' career preparedness in secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, workplace exposure programmes and industry mentorship programmes were found to have strong positive and significant relationships with students' career preparedness, indicating that increased collaboration between schools and industries enhances students' career awareness, employability skills, occupational knowledge, and readiness for future employment. Furthermore, the study established that industry mentorship programmes exerted a slightly stronger influence on students' career preparedness than workplace exposure programmes, underscoring the importance of sustained guidance and interaction with industry professionals in shaping students' career aspirations and workforce readiness.

Recommendations

1. School administrators and educational policymakers in Rivers State should establish and strengthen formal partnerships with industries, businesses, and professional organizations to provide students with regular workplace exposure programmes such as industrial visits, job shadowing, career excursions, and workplace observation activities. This will enable students to gain firsthand knowledge of workplace realities, develop employability skills, and make informed career decisions based on practical experiences rather than assumptions.

2. Secondary schools should institutionalize industry mentorship programmes by engaging experienced professionals from diverse occupational fields to serve as mentors, career advisers, and role models for students. Regular mentorship interactions, career talks, coaching sessions, and professional guidance will enhance students' career awareness, build their confidence in career planning, and improve their preparedness for successful transition into the world of work.

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