

# World of Work

Real  
Apprentice  
Scheme

Stoke  
Newington  
School

The eighth day in July has seen its fair share of historical events. On this day in 1497, Vasco da Gama set sail on his first direct European voyage to India. Almost 300 years later, the American Declaration of Independence was read aloud and the famous Liberty Bell rung. It's the birthday of Liverpool's new striker Robbie Keane, and the day the third man to walk on the Moon, Pete Conrad, took his final steps. From reports of crashed spacecraft in New Mexico, to the Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs escaping from prison, the day holds a special place in the lives of millions.

However, aliens and astronauts aside, for MITIE's Real Apprentice graduate Michael Nyamekye 8 July is remembered as being the day the student became the teacher.

#### Back to school

Michael now works in MITIE's facilities management business, having graduated from our award-winning Real Apprentice scheme in 2007. Born and bred in East London, a stone's throw from Tower Hamlets, Michael joined the scheme as a way to get into the world of work, which in an area that has the highest unemployment in the nation's capital at 11.7%, is easier said than done. A devout Christian, Michael does a lot of bible work in his spare time.

After a successful year spent developing his business acumen, Michael recently returned to Stoke Newington School where he was once a pupil, to teach a class of 13-14 year olds about the world of work. Among other things, he discussed the importance of getting the most out of their upcoming work placements, which form part of the national curriculum.

#### World of work

Walking into a classroom full of teenagers can be a pretty daunting experience, especially when the class is being taught by your old maths teacher, but Michael took it in his stride. "It was really enjoyable going back and was great to talk to the kids about my experiences and to see what they thought work was all about!"

As part of our 2008/09 community volunteering programme, MITIE is running a number of World of Work days at our Skills Centre schools throughout the UK. The days are a great way to show the bright young minds of the future that there are more types of jobs out there for them than simply being a doctor, lawyer, footballer or rapper.

Indeed, having a job is an important part of belonging to, and contributing to the life of a community. However, many young people finish school without the right skills to find and hold down a job. As Michael points out: "Probably the

biggest challenge is that a lot of people don't know what they immediately want to do at 16 or 17 when they leave school. Plus, it is increasingly difficult to get a job without experience these days."

"When I was at school I had no idea of the variety of jobs that were out there." Too true. A lot of young people think that to make it you have to be on TV, in music or a sports star. They just don't consider the business world as a way to succeed.

The problem is two fold. In the UK, we've fallen foul of the 15 minutes of fame culture where success is measured in column inches. It seems that every week there is a new batch of celebrities coming off the production line who offer little incentive for the youth of today to explore the workplace for roles that suit their talents. Additionally, with the serious costs now associated with gaining higher education qualifications a real problem for school leavers, there appears to be more and more barriers to building a successful career. It's estimated that on average, graduates now leave university with debts of around £21,000. A worrying statistic considering that the UK government has pledged that they'll have 50% of young people studying for a degree by 2010.

#### The truth is out there

The reality is you don't need to go to university to succeed, and university isn't for everyone. Bill Gates hasn't got a degree and neither has Richard Branson. Although, these are two extremes, the UK skills shortage in construction and trade skills means that young people are now well advised to take up apprenticeships. In 2008, pupils at Stoke Newington School achieved a 92% pass rate of the BTEC Construction Diploma – the equivalent to five GCSEs – A-C grade, with two achieving distinction level. The school has noticed a marked improvement in student behaviour since the MITIE Skills Centre began and a huge improvement in general studies.

#### The skills to pay the bills

Talking about his time since leaving school and going through the Real Apprentice scheme, Michael sees his biggest accomplishments to date as his ability to effectively manage his time and workload. The scheme has also left him hungry for further success and has made him want to keep learning new things. "MITIE covers such a large area with such a broad range of services that it has the potential to offer a lot to the younger generation." Understandably, Michael's family are very impressed by his achievements. "They are proud, they like it now that I am out and earning money for myself."

Michael has been impressed by MITIE's commitment to investing in its people and the community as a whole, and believes that the World of Work days would have greatly benefited himself and his peers while at school. "I think if anything, the days act as an incentive for school children to see first hand what can happen if you get out there and work hard." With more days planned throughout the year, the initiative promises to show pupils across the UK that there's more out there than meets the eye.