

REASONS FOR YOUTH FROM NIGERA AND SOMALILAND TO APPLY FOR
ONLINE CERTIFIED COURSES

Reasons for Youth from Nigeria and Somaliland to Apply for Online Certified Courses

Demi L. van Zelst (0589659)

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Faculty of Social Sciences

Utrecht University

Supervisor: Dr. Tjitske de Groot (PhD)

Second reader: Prof. Dr. Paul Leseman

Internship organisation: Butterfly Works

Internship supervisor: Jojanneke Hendriks

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Abstract

In Nigeria and Somaliland, where youth unemployment rates are high, young people struggle to meet the skills required in an ever-changing labour market. Research has shown that to combat youth employment; youngsters have started to prefer non-formal education as an alternative to formal education to improve their skills, knowledge and employability. This research investigates why young people in Nigeria and Somaliland enrol in online certified courses and how these certificate structures could be improved based on participant feedback. Based on literature research on the impact of non-formal education on employability, an online interview was conducted with the alumni of the Design Thinking course. An online questionnaire was also distributed to youth with previous experiences with online courses from Nigeria and Somaliland to gain insights into their experiences and opinions on online courses and certificates. The analysis demonstrates that the benefits of technological advances and the provision of the teaching of skills that are sought for in the job market provided by the courses are two crucial factors that increase the interest of the youth in online certified courses. This study indicates that young people in Nigeria and Somaliland resort to online certified courses to acquire skills and knowledge to stand out in the labour market. Further research could compare the reasons why young people in Western vs. non-Western countries apply for online certified courses.

Keywords: Unemployment, employability, non-formal education, youth, online courses.

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Samenvatting

In Nigeria en Somaliland, waar de jeugdwerkloosheid hoog is, hebben jongeren moeite om te voldoen aan de vaardigheden die vereist zijn op een steeds veranderende arbeidsmarkt. Onderzoek heeft uitgewezen dat jongeren in de strijd tegen jeugdwerkloosheid de voorkeur zijn gaan geven aan niet-formeel onderwijs als alternatief voor formeel onderwijs om hun vaardigheden, kennis en inzetbaarheid te verbeteren. Dit onderzoek gaat na waarom jongeren in Nigeria en Somaliland zich inschrijven voor online gecertificeerde cursussen en hoe deze certificaatstructuren verbeterd zouden kunnen worden op basis van feedback van deelnemers. Op basis van literatuuronderzoek naar de impact van niet-formeel onderwijs op inzetbaarheid, werd een online interview afgenomen bij de alumni van de Design Thinking cursus. Er werd ook een online vragenlijst verspreid onder de jongeren met eerdere ervaringen met online cursussen uit Nigeria en Somaliland om inzicht te krijgen in hun ervaringen en meningen over online cursussen en certificaten. De analyse toont aan dat de voordelen van de technologische vooruitgang en het aanleren van vaardigheden waarnaar gezocht wordt op de arbeidsmarkt, twee cruciale factoren zijn die de interesse van de jongeren in gecertificeerde online cursussen doen toenemen. Deze studie wijst erop dat jongeren in Nigeria and Somaliland gebruik maken van gecertificeerde online cursussen om vaardigheden en kennis te verwerven waarmee ze zich kunnen onderscheiden op de arbeidsmarkt. Verder onderzoek zou een vergelijking kunnen maken van de redenen waarom jongeren in westerse vs. niet-westerse landen zich aanmelden voor gecertificeerde online cursussen.

Trefwoorden: Werkloosheid, inzetbaarheid, non-formeel onderwijs, jongeren, online cursussen.

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Reasons for Youth from Nigeria and Somaliland to Apply for Online Certified Courses

Youth unemployment has been one of the most difficult challenges that is addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations (DESA, 2018). The most recent data retrieved from the International Labor Organisation (ILO) shows a total estimate of youth unemployment of 17.2% as of 2020 (International Labour Organisation, 2022). International organisations such as Plan International and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) show increasing attempts to bridge the gap between employment and education to reduce global youth unemployment around the world. For instance, their Youth Economic Empowerment (YEE) program focuses on providing education in means of specific training that provide life, work, technical, hard, and soft skills, that support the youth to raise their employability (Plan International, 2020). According to Osidipe (2017), unemployment is largely related to unemployed youth's incapacity to gain appropriate knowledge and skills through formal or traditional education. In this rapidly evolving era of fast-paced acceleration of the global economy and technology, formal education institutions may no longer be able to equip young people with the skills that are required in the ever-changing job market (Grajcevci & Shala, 2016). While, education in all forms has been set as one of the most robust approaches to fight against unemployment around the globe, there is a growing necessity for alternative ways that go beyond formal education and traditional ways of tackling rising rates of unemployment (Green, Hornyak, & Heppard, 2007). One of the education types that has developed in the past decade, in response to the ever-changing nature of the global economy and education, has been non-formal education (Souto-Otero, 2016).

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Non-formal education is one of the three main education categories alongside formal and informal education. While formal or traditional education is found in schools and training institutions which are aimed at educating the students within the framework of a certain curriculum; non-formal education can be provided by a variety of different communities and organisations and use a more learner-centered approach that prioritises the participants' needs and convenience (Latchem, 2018). Furthermore, formal education attendees are expected to visit classes and be assessed on their learning experiences in order to receive certificates and degrees (Devran & Elitas, 2017; Grajcevci & Shala, 2016). This category of education disregards the active participation of the students as well as their core learning ideals and skill development goals by instead evaluating the student individually through a standardised assessment (Grajcevci & Shala, 2016). Some scholars also consider non-formal education as a complement or alternative to traditional education (Debarliev et al., 2022). Informal education, instead, emphasises unconsciously learning via experiences in friendships, families, and workplaces (Tudor, 2013). For the analysis of this research, which will investigate the reasons why online courses, a form of non-formal education, has been preferred over formal education, this study excludes informal education because it is based on relationships rather than learning through a programme.

The main distinguishing feature of non-formal education is that it places the needs of the students at the centre of the learning process due to the demand-driven nature of the online courses (Grajcevci & Shala, 2016). As a result, unlike the traditional, non-formal education is able to specifically target the skills and attitudes that the participants wish to obtain for their future employment and their own interests rather than the fixed curriculum of formal education (Tudor, 2013). Scholars such as Latchem (2018) have argued that the youth has

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started to prefer non-formal education as an alternative way to increase their employability, especially in developing countries with crippling unemployment levels.

Whereas studies have shown that there has been a negative correlation between formal education and unemployment, there has been little research conducted, especially in light of these current technological advancements, on the extent to which non-formal education decreases unemployability (Garben, 2012; Souto-Otero et al., 2013; Riddell & Song, 2011). Nevertheless, Souto-Otero et al. (2013), found that non-formal education significantly helps the development of specialised skills and connections that help the youth to understand the job market and secure a job more easily than traditional forms of education. Although there is little research on the impact of non-formal education on employability, several organisations have investigated this correlation. International Youth Foundation (2011), which aims to provide opportunities for young people affected by inequality of education opportunity, has disclosed that the skills students gained through non-formal education have aided their subsequent employment (Pompa, 2014). An incident where non-formal education has improved the employability of its participants has been observed at Microsoft's Youth Empowerment Program, where participants shared that the online program has positively impacted their employment (Pompa, 2014). Grasping a better understanding of the interplay between non-formal education and (un)employment can, therefore, provide valuable insights on how to better meet the needs of the participants. Online courses have increasingly become one of the most preferred ways of non-formal education, particularly due to the recent surge in the use of technology in education. Therefore, online courses can provide a space where the interplay between non-formal education and (un)employment can be explored (Garben, 2012).

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Online Courses

Today, many people benefit from open and distance learning alongside traditional education through online courses (Latchem, 2018). As a type of non-formal education, open and distance learning provides flexible, short, and learner-centred learning, where the student determines the process's time, place, and pace (Latchem, 2018; Grajcevci & Shala, 2016). Also, distance learning aspect of online courses provides the flexibility of non-physical attendance for the participant to access the education from a distance (Latchem, 2018). The accessibility of online education makes it preferable by the youth around the world (Latchem, 2014). Moreover, this increasing form of open and distance learning provides individual or group learning, or a combination of both, which makes it further preferable by the youth nowadays (Moore et al., 2002).

Massive Online Education Courses (MOOCs) are one of the expanding examples of open and distance learning. MOOCs refer to a new format of online teaching and distance and open learning that is used by many universities globally. Since these online courses are accessible to all (mainly based on registration), one course can have thousands of participants gaining access from all around the world (Banks & Meinert, 2016). MOOCs have only become a significant part of the online education field since its establishment in 2008 (Banks & Meinert, 2016). Ever since, the interest in MOOCs has brought about a systemic change in higher education institutions thanks to recent technological advancements (Gašević et al., 2014). MOOCs provide a wide range of options to participants from all around the world, from numerous institutions, which offer personal interest topics or characteristic courses on gaining specific skills (Banks & Meinert, 2016). According to Banks and Meinert (2016), users of MOOCs have disclosed that they prefer to choose such online courses to increase

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their employability by utilising the certification of online courses to create outstanding applications in the job market.

Online courses have advantages for learners as well as drawbacks. The most notable benefits of online courses include efficiency, affordability, accessibility, flexibility in time and space, and the self-paced learning opportunity (Thomson, 2010; You & Kang, 2014). Firstly, online courses allow learners to participate from anywhere in the world and access them more easily than formal education. With the development of the internet and the use of smart devices, open and distance education is becoming more accessible in places in the world where education accessibility has been problematic, such as the Global South (Latchem, 2018). Secondly, the flexibility in the learning environment of online courses enables learners to adjust the timing of the course to their personal and professional schedules (Thomson, 2010).

The main disadvantages of online courses are the challenges encountered in the learning process, and cultural suitability of the content and approach. First and foremost, due to the lack of one-on-one interaction with the instructors, there are difficulties in monitoring the learner's progress and providing feedback by the instructor (Sithole et al., 2019). While the presence of an instructor in the physical environment discourages cheating, the ease of access to information via the internet in online education can lead to academic dishonesty (Sithole et al., 2019). Secondly, the impact of online education is highly influenced by the fact that most online courses do not provide the content in languages other than English (Latchem, 2018). Individuals from non-English speaking countries need to have sufficient knowledge of English to benefit from such courses. Furthermore, since many online courses are Western-based, it is critical to verify that the approach and content are culturally suitable for also non-

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Western countries, as many of these online courses are available worldwide (Latchem, 2018). For instance, there are different learning processes between individual and collective societies. Individual cultures prioritise individual learning, whereas group and intra-group education are emphasised in collective societies (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This may result in differences in the needs of the participants of online courses based on their cultural background. Even though many open and distance learning programs provide both individual and/or group learning as mentioned previously, participants from collective societies may struggle to adapt with self-paced learning (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important for Western institutions or organisations to look into the aforementioned limitations, as such restrictions about language and culture can be improved to reach an even wider audience globally.

As the number of open and distance learners from non-Western, non-English speaking, and collective societies are increasing, feedback from participants can be useful to help improve the effectiveness and quality of online courses and education. Evaluations of the participants of online education from the Global South, which suffers from dire levels of unemployment, can help the institutions better understand and bridge the gap between (un)employability and non-formal education (Latchem, 2018). In an attempt to understand this gap better, this research looks into two of the countries in Africa that suffer from high rates of unemployment: Nigeria and Somaliland. The next section will look into unemployment and online or non-formal education and their interplay in Nigeria and Somaliland, individually and respectively.

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Unemployment Rates of Nigeria and Somaliland

Nigeria has the highest youth population in the African continent (Osidipe, 2017). In the research conducted by National Population Commission in Nigeria in 2016, it was found that young people formed 31.7% of the society (Jega, 2017), which leads to what is referred to as the "youth bulge" where a significant share of a society is comprised of the youth (Jega, 2017). The main challenge the youth face in society arises due to a lack of economic opportunities, which cause significant concerns, such as high levels of unemployment (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2017). Even in a time of economic normalcy, Nigeria faced a high level of youth unemployment (Akeju & Olanipekun, 2014). In 2015, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) depicted the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria as 8.2% (International Labour Organisation, 2022). Already in 2020, this number has more than doubled, reaching 19.7% (International Labour Organisation, 2022).

Somaliland is the other target country of this research. This self-declared state in the northwest of Somalia is not recognised by the United Nations (Renders & Terlinden, 2010). Based on the World Bank (2015), the country is the fourth-poorest country in the World and invests 70% of its budget in the security sector due to internal conflict and regional instability (Muktar Adan, 2017). As a result, adequate investment in education is not prioritised (Muktar Adan, 2017). Furthermore, while the youth in Somaliland struggle with education quality, employability is also another challenge to Somalilanders. The youth unemployability level in Somaliland reaches 67%, based on the United Nations Reports in 2014 (Nour, 2015).

Improving the needed skills among the Somalilander youth is required to reduce unemployment and is necessary for the development of society (Muktar Adan, 2017; Osidipe, 2017).

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The unemployment rates have been steadily increasing for the past few decades both in Nigeria and Somaliland, which leads the youth to find alternative ways to stand out in the job market (Osidipe, 2017; Jones, 2016). In both countries, online courses are seen as one of the most popular ways to have an outstanding application. The demand for online courses increases not only because of the course's provided skills but also the new job possibilities (Osidipe, 2017).

Furthermore, many courses provide certificates of completion or accreditation to their participants. As a result, these certificates help the youth increase their chance of finding a job by improving their skills. However, the extent to which online certificates can help reduce this unemployability is uncertain due to a lack of oversight of the certification processes and unreliable programs on the internet (Banks & Meinert, 2016). The following section will introduce this research in light of this information.

Research

The research question of this study is: *"Why do youth in Nigeria and Somaliland apply for online certified courses?"* The sub-questions that will be further explored through interviews and questionnaires will support gaining a deeper understanding: *"Which qualities of online certified courses increase the interest of the youth?"*, *"How do the youth evaluate online certified courses?"*, and *"What distinguishes certificates in the job market?"*

This research aims to discover why young people in Nigeria and Somaliland enrol in online certified courses and how these certificate structures can be improved based on participant feedback. These two countries have been selected based on convenience, since Butterfly Works (BW), a social design studio is in direct contact with a large group of alumni from Nigeria and Somaliland who completed their online certified Design Thinking

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course. This research will provide essential insights since there is a lack of research on the impact of online certified courses on young people and their employability. This study is crucial for enhancing these certificates for young people in these countries with high unemployment rates, which see the online courses as an alternative way to improve their skills and knowledge, as they may lead to an improvement in employment rates (Osidiye, 2017; Debarliev et al., 2022).

Methodology

To answer the following question: "*Why do youth in Nigeria and Somaliland apply for the online certified courses?*" a sample of respondents were selected from the Butterfly Works' community, which includes both young people who have taken BW's Design Thinking course and those who have not, for qualitative methods of interview and questionnaire. The ethical approval of the Ethical Review Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University can be found in the Appendix A. In this section, the methodology for this research will be introduced.

Respondents

Respondents of Interviews

Seven Nigerian and three Somalilander youngsters were interviewed for this study. The respondents were chosen from the Butterfly Works Design Thinking course graduates aged 18 to 35 by invitation. Six women and four men, Nigerian and Somalilander youngsters from different backgrounds were involved in this study. Table 1. demonstrates the nationalities, ages, and education levels of the respondents.

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Table 1.

Respondents of the Interview

Country	Gender		Age	Degree Level		
	Female	Male		Highschool	Bachelor	Master's
Nigeria	3	4	28	1	4	2
Somaliland	3	0	25	0	3	0
Total	6	4	27	1	7	2

The interviews have been conducted to understand experiences with online certified courses and how they previously utilised the certificates. All of the interview respondents had obtained certificates before.

Respondents of Questionnaire

Furthermore, a qualitative questionnaire was formulated to support the investigation on the youth's perspectives on certificates and to enhance the qualities of the certificates depending on their responses. The questionnaire was distributed to interested respondents via the Butterfly Work community and WhatsApp groups, which generated a random sample of respondents. The Nigerian attendees number was 21, while 8 of the respondents were from Somaliland. This questionnaire did not ask for a prerequisite of having completed BW's Design Thinking course to participate, with the goal of reaching a larger number of young people from Nigeria and Somaliland who have experienced online certified courses to acquire

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more generalisable insights. The demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Respondents of the questionnaire

Country	Gender		Age	Degree Level			
	Female	Male		Highschool Other	Bachelor	Master's	
Nigeria	8	13	27	3	14	1	3
Somaliland	4	4	26	2	2	4	0
Total	12	17	26.5	5	16	5	3

Furthermore, the number of certificates held by questionnaire respondents were analysed in order to gain a better understanding of their previous experience. The respondents were asked about the number of certificates they obtained in order to understand their experience with their participation in previous certified courses. As indicated in Table 3, most of the certifications possessed by questionnaire respondents were gained through online courses.

Table 3.

Number of certificates the questionnaire respondents obtained

Number of Certificates	Online Certificates	Certificates
Does not obtain	8	4
Between 1-3	11	12
Between 4-7	5	5
More than 7	5	8

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Instruments

In this study, semi-structured interviews and a qualitative questionnaire were used together to obtain in-depth information and reach a larger number of people to attain more generalisable results (Adams & Cox, 2008). The use of a mix of these qualitative methods allows comparison between the questionnaire and interview respondents, which supports a better understanding of their insights about online certified course. Since the responses are based on the respondents' personal feedback, the combined use of these two methods allow for an open, honest, and more complete data to emerge for the analysis.

Semi-Structured interviews

The interviews allowed respondents to express themselves first-hand and permitted the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the users' perspectives, thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Tekin & Tekin, 2006). As a research method, the semi-structured interview method was used to create space alongside the interview-focused themes and questions, to explore respondents' personal experiences holistically and systematically (Jamshed, 2014). Furthermore, this structure aided in the sequence and formulation of the questions (Boeije, 2009).

Interviews were conducted based on four sections which contained fourteen questions in total (Appendix B). Interview questions were arranged into four blocks to facilitate the interview more manageable, with related topics grouped (Boeije, 2009). The first component examines the alumnis' prior experience in online and offline courses, while the second section focuses on the skills needed in the job market. The questions in the third section look into the meaning and purpose of the certificates for the respondents. Finally, the fourth

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section inquires about the respondents' thoughts and experiences with BW's Design Thinking course. The topics included in these sections were specifically chosen to acquire a better understanding of why people take online courses and their prior experiences with certificates.

Qualitative Questionnaire

A qualitative questionnaire was developed based on three themes: previous experiences with online courses, the skills they expect to gain from the online courses, and the features they would like to see in the certificate. As a result, respondents' preferences and opinions on certificates were acquired. Furthermore, the questions provided insights into how to improve course certificates to make them more outstanding based on the users' needs.

The questionnaire contained 22 questions (Appendix C), including consent and personal information from the respondents. To understand the experience of the youth on certificates, open-ended and multiple-choice questions were introduced. The multiple questions provided seven options and included the "other" option to add their opinion if it was needed to understand their preferences better. The respondents were asked to pick two answers that suited them the most in the multiple-choice questions. For example, one of the questions was, "Which features have the most impact on the decision to enrol in an online course?" which analysed the reasons for attending a course.

Design and procedure of interviews

At the beginning of April, course alumni were asked to participate in the research. WhatsApp groups and e-mail lists were used to send the invitations. Meetings with the respondents who were interested in participating in the study were scheduled, and online interviews were held in April 2022.

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Before the interviews, respondents were asked to sign the informed consent form (Appendix D) and received an information letter (Appendix E). The respondents were asked for their oral consent to record the interviews at the start of the interview. Because the research took place in different locations, the interviews were conducted via Google Meet at the Butterfly Works headquarters. The interviews lasted, on average, about 20 minutes and were conducted in English.

Analysis of interviews

After the researcher transcribed the interviews, the answers given to each question were analysed. In the analysing process, Nvivo20 was used. The responses were put through a coding process to make them useful by picking the key parts, combining them, and labelling them (Boeije, 2009). Similar opinions and experiences were categorised and combined under the same themes to reduce the information to the essence of the experience (Cresweel et al., 2007). For instance, the answers regarding motivation, previous experiences, advantages of online courses, evaluation and expected skills are gathered under “The reason to enrol in an online certified course” umbrella definition. This theme was developed from the data the respondents provided on the motivation that impacts young people. As a part of the horizontalisation, the reduction process, the repetitive statements and irrelevant responses were not included in the groupings (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). A summary of the meaning clusters can be found in Appendix F.

In order to address the research question based on the respondents' responses, a theme list (Appendix F) was organised. The list was formed based on the results of the interviews to be

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used in the analysis to provide a clear understanding of the responses given by the respondents.

Design and procedure questionnaire

The survey was shared with the respondents in the middle of April. The questionnaire contained written request for the informed consent of the respondents. The questions were in English and prepared in a straightforward tongue to make them easier for respondents to understand. Furthermore, the data was collected by Qualtrics and the approximate response time for the questionnaire was 8 minutes.

Analysis of qualitative questionnaire

Because of the various question styles, the responses to the questionnaire were examined differently than interview responses. Similar to the interview procedure, open-ended questions were coded, and similar responses were grouped and compared. To condense the information to the essence of the experience, similar ideas and experiences were grouped and combined under the same topics (Cresweel et al., 2007). As in the interview analysis, themes allowed for more in-depth comprehension. The respondents' incentives are sought under the theme "Motivation", which deals with the reasons of respondents to apply for an online certified course. This theme discusses the opportunities it provides in the job market and the impact of collaboration and networking. In analysing the data, Microsoft Excel was used. Furthermore, Qualtrics presented the answers that received the most responses in the multiple-choice questions, which facilitated the analysis of the responses.

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Results

This research examines why young people in Somaliland and Nigeria apply for online certified courses and how can the effectiveness of these certificates be improved. This section analyses the responses of the interview and the questionnaire, which together were used to gain a more in-depth understanding of the topic under research. To comprehend the similarities and differences between responses, the data of the interview and the questionnaire are presented together. The data gathered will be presented under sub-questions, and the main research question will be attempted to be answered by answering the sub-questions.

The qualities of online certified courses that increase the interest of the youth

To investigate the first sub-question, “*Which qualities of online certified courses increase the interest of the youth?*”, interview respondents were asked what skills they would like to learn from certified courses and what skills are required in the current job market. Furthermore, to understand the influence of international organisations in their choice of certified courses, they were asked whether obtaining a certificate from an international or local organisation made a difference in their country.

The most favoured skills for interview respondents were soft skills, specialised knowledge and digital skills. Four people from the interview cited soft skills as one of the top three skills, which include skills such as emotional intelligence and public speaking. Moreover, three people stated that they were looking for information on specific topics in the courses. Finally, three respondents said they wanted to learn digital skills that help them comprehend and use technology better. Furthermore, interview respondents have given similar answers

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when asked about the skills required in the job market. Seven interview respondents stated that digital skills related to the use and understanding of technology are the most sought-after skills in the labour market. Moreover, communication skills which include empathy, were mentioned by three people. Finally, three people mentioned problem-solving, which is a soft skill that is similar to analytical and strategic thinking, creativity, and planning, as one of the three abilities needed in the market.

In addition, it has been determined that providing international certificates in courses correspondingly affects the individuals' motivation to enrol in a course. While seven respondents believe obtaining a certificate from an international organisation helps them stand out in the job market, three respondents stated that local and international certificates value same in their country. Respondent 10 remarked his opinion: "*Due to the falling standard of education in my country, Nigeria, most of the local certifications are not recognised internationally ... you will need to undergo further training to be able to measure up to international standards.*"

While the answers of the interview respondents provided detailed information, the same questions were asked of the questionnaire respondents in the form of open-ended questions to confirm this data. Table 4 contains an overview of the responses to the questionnaire regarding the most wanted skills from online certified courses. Questionnaire respondents support the responses of interview respondents by stating that the skill they would like to learn the most is digital skills. Furthermore, in the question of the skills currently in demand in the job market, it was observed that the answers of the questionnaire respondents supported the data obtained from the interview. Lastly, 23 of the questionnaire respondents

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confirmed the data obtained from the interview by stating that taking a certified course from an international organisation is more beneficial in the job market.

Table 4.

The skills that questionnaire respondents expect to gain from the online courses

Skills	Number of people who noted
<i>Individual Interest</i>	
Digital skills	8
Management skills	6
Communication skills	4
Soft Skills	3
Marketing Skills	3
<i>Needed in job market</i>	
Soft Skills	9
Digital Skills	7
Communication Skills	6
Management Skills	6
Problem Solving	3

Evaluation of the online certified courses

This sub-question, "*How do the youth evaluate online certified courses?*" was examined based on the youths' previous experience with online certified courses. During the interview, respondents were asked why they preferred online courses and what they liked about them.

The most emphasised good features of the online courses were the content of the course and how this content was conveyed to the interview respondents. Respondent 4 stated: "*...the*

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templates of the tools are one of the major things that makes a course very good. " The respondents highlighted the advantages of online courses when evaluating the courses, by stating the reasons that led them to choose an online one. The most frequently mentioned benefits of online courses for Nigerian and Somalilander youth are the accessibility and the usefulness of the lessons, which includes flexibility of time, the ability to work from anywhere, and the processing of the courses at the respondents' own pace. While five respondents highlighted the advantage of saving time, five of them noted that the comfort of working from anywhere makes online courses more beneficial. In addition, two of the respondents emphasised the benefits of the variety of the online courses provided for the youth. Moreover, advantages of online courses such as the option to rewatch lectures, have been highlighted: *"...online classes were recorded so I could listen to the recording to get clarifications."* (Respondent 4)

The data collected from questionnaire respondents confirmed that of the interview respondents by stating that the most vital advantages of online courses are the flexibility of time and space. As stated in one of the questionnaire responses: *"With the online course, you can receive or learn from anybody anywhere in the world, unlike the offline courses that you have to be present with the teacher."*

Improvements

To investigate the next sub-question, *"What distinguishes certificates in the global labour market?"* interview respondents were asked their suggestions to improve the structure of the certifications they obtain. In addition, questionnaire respondents were asked which features they preferred on certificates.

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The interview respondents pointed out areas where the course could be improved and gave recommendations. Four respondents stated that the content of the online courses and the skills acquired should be explained in detail in certificates. As indicated by respondent 4:

"...organisations should show the advantages their online courses provide at the certificate, certificates are a great asset." In addition to this suggestion, one respondent recommended that organisations should provide recommendation letters for graduates after the course.

The responses to the multiple-choice questions that were asked to the Questionnaire respondents regarding the features they would like to see in an online course and the certificate it provides are given in Table 5. Firstly, considering the features to increase the trust towards certificates and electability of the course, the youth from Nigeria and Somaliland responded similarly. The majority stated that the institution that issues the certificate strengthens the course's reliability. The skills provided by the online course also influenced their choice. Furthermore, when considering the aspects of the certificate that make their job applications more outstanding, the skills obtained from the course and the institution's name were more relevant, while individual performance is less preferred.

Table 5.

Respondents' Answers to the Multiple Choice Questions at the Questionnaire

Responses of the respondents	Number of people who chose the option
<i>Why do you want to take online certified courses?</i>	
To gain or improve specific skills	14
To increase employability	11
To expand network	5
<i>In your opinion, why do people in your country want to take online certified courses?</i>	

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To increase their employability	18
To boost CV	15
To gain or improve specific skills	9
To prove qualification/learning	7
<i>Which features have the most impact on the decision to enrol in an online course?</i>	
The skills which the course provides	19
The certificate	9
The price of the course	8
<i>Which elements of an online course increase your trust in its certificate?</i>	
The institution which gives the certificate	23
The name of the course	10
Alumni Feedback	9
<i>In your opinion, which features of the certificates make your job application more outstanding in the job market?</i>	
The skills that the program provides	22
The name of the institution	16
Individual-level of performance/commitment	10

Note: Respondents marked two options that suit them most.

Motivation

In addition to the sub-questions, to answer the main research question, "*Why do youth in Nigeria and Somaliland apply for online certified courses?*" respondents were asked about their motivation for taking online certified courses based on their previous experiences, what these certificates mean for them, and how the certificates are perceived in their societies. They were also asked what opportunities the certificates would provide for them.

When the interview respondents were asked about their motivation for taking online courses, out of the top three motives of the interviewees, the motivation to learn new knowledge was mentioned by seven respondents; five respondents said they desired to develop a new skill. Also, the motivation for career development was mentioned by three

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respondents. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents answered similarly to the question of what the certificates mean for them. The youngsters stated that the certificates they obtain are proof of their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, it represents the completion of the course. A quote describes this from respondent 4: *"Many certificates for me are a proof that you've completed a certain course. And you have been certified to have and use the skills and knowledge that the course provides."*

The respondents provided similar answers about the way they think the certificates are perceived in their societies. It was discovered that there were two fundamental motivations, increasing employability and improving their job application process by supporting their curriculum vitae (CV). Eight of them commented that certificates are perceived as an essential element for the job market and job application processes. As stated by respondent 9, *"Organisations will be willing to hire you for an internship or give you a job opportunity, if you show that you have attended an online training."*

When interview respondents were asked how these certificates can provide opportunities, five people expressed that certifications would help them develop their careers. Respondent 4 expressed the importance of certifications as follows: *"I know that I can't climb the ladder and get to the top of my career without a certification or license."* Secondly, four respondents responded that certificates could be used to demonstrate that they continued to improve themselves, especially to future potential employers. Respondent 10 discussed the recognition: *"Online course certificates helped me gain recognition for my commitment to continuous learning and self-improvement, while helping towards future job opportunities."* Lastly, two respondents pointed out to the opportunities to collaborate with other

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organisations by using the recognition of the certificates of certain organisations due to an increase in professional credibility in their careers.

Table 4, which was mentioned earlier, demonstrates the motivation of young people to enrol in an online certified course. Skill development and increasing employability were two of the most important motivations in enrolling in an online course for interview respondents. Questionnaire respondents further mentioned network expansion among their motivations. When the reasons for acquiring a certificate in their community were investigated based on their opinion, it was discovered that questionnaire respondents confirmed the interview respondents' responses. The certificates are perceived in both countries as a great opportunity to increase employability and improve their CV.

In addition, when the questionnaire respondents were asked if their university degrees were sufficient for job application processes, the majority of the respondents responded "No". As a further explanation, four of the respondents stated that some knowledge and skills are not taught in local universities. Moreover, respondents have disclosed that additional certificates assist in distinguishing highly skilled or educated individuals from others. Contrary to respondents' responses that the certificates are insufficient, nine individuals responded that degrees are sufficient because many career prospects only require a university diploma.

The data collected from questionnaire respondents confirmed that of the interview by stating opportunities for obtaining online course certificates such as career development, increasing employability, and recognition of skill or knowledge. Fourteen respondents mentioned that certificates help their competencies in specific skills and knowledge to be recognised in the job market. As remarked by one of the respondents: "*Earning a certificate*

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can demonstrate that you have acquired specific skills and knowledge in a particular area, which can make you more marketable to employers." Furthermore, seven of them stated similarly that certificates could increase their employability in the future and offer better job opportunities. Lastly, six people responded that the certificates would provide an opportunity for professional development.

Discussion

This research aimed to investigate Nigerian and Somalilander youth's experiences through interviews and questionnaires to gain insights into their reasons for enrolling in online certified courses and understand the aspects of the certificates to increase their effectiveness. The following research question guided the current study: *"Why do youth in Nigeria and Somaliland apply for online certified courses?"*. The sub-questions support gaining a deeper understanding: *"Which qualities of the online certified courses increase the interest of the youth?"*, *"How do the youth evaluate online certified courses?"*, and *"What distinguishes certificates in the global labour market?"* The findings for the last sub-question will be presented as recommendations within this discussion part below. The limitations of this research as well as some considerations for further research will follow.

The data on the Nigerian and Somalilander youth's motivation to enrol in online certified courses supported the statement of Osidipe (2017), that alternative methods are considered to increase employability and to stand out in the job market. Moreover, the past experiences of the respondents, as well as their opinions on online courses and how to improve certifications, were also discussed. The benefits of online courses and the skills they provide were found to significantly impact young people's perceptions of online courses in general.

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The findings of the analysis for the main research question and sub-questions are examined in further depth and compared to the literature in the following section.

The qualities that increase the interest of the youth in online certified courses

Considering the first sub-question, "*Which qualities of online certified courses increase the interest of the youth?*", the findings showed that the advancement of technology and the benefits and skills provided by online courses were the two factors that increased respondents' interest in online certified courses. Related to Garben's (2012) statement on youth preferring the online technology for individual learning, it was found that young people are indeed increasingly interested in online courses due to the technological advantages they provide such as flexibility in time and space. This is in line with what Grajcevci-Shala (2016) also found, which is that the convenience of online courses in terms of time and place, and the emphasis on specific skills, increase the interest of young people. This research's findings have highlighted special skills such as soft skills, which include personality traits that help employees interact with others and establish successful communication; as well as digital skills, which help understand and work with technology. Improving the benefits and skills provided by the online courses as well the application of the rapidly advancing technology, can therefore, further increase the interest of the youth in Nigeria and Somaliland.

Evaluation of online certified courses

In response to the following sub-question, "*How do the youth evaluate online certified courses?*", respondents' evaluations of their previous experiences mainly focused on factors such as the structure of the content and accessibility of tools, which were regarded as

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motivating aspects for attracting respondents' interest in the future. The findings have disclosed that the youth value the accessibility of education material such as recordings of lectures, as it makes the content available anytime, from anywhere in the world. Respondents have also highlighted time-efficiency. This offers further accessibility to online courses as they can follow the material in their own pace and time. This is in line with Latchem's (2014) findings which argues that the flexibility of non-physical attendance, which allows the participant to be able to access the education from a distance, makes online courses one of the most preferred by the youth around the world (Latchem, 2014).

Reason's to enrol in online certified courses

Examining the main research question of this thesis:'''*Why do youth in Nigeria and Somaliland apply for online certified courses?*'' findings show that the main reason why young people in Somaliland and Nigeria enrol in online courses is to increase their employment. This finding supports the literature that argues that education is a robust way of fighting unemployment (Green, Hornyak, & Heppard, 2007). Moreover, revealing the respondents' preference of online courses -a form of non-formal education, to increase their employability, this research argues that non-formal education can also be a way of increasing employability. Consequently, respondents stated that the diploma they received from formal education was not sufficient in the job application process, so they turned to an alternative method of non-formal education, online certified courses. This is in line with the findings of Debarliew et al. (2022) and Osidipe (2017) as well, which argue that the youth from countries with high unemployment rates may prefer to enrol in online courses as an alternative way to improve their skills and increase their employability.

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Findings of this research has also showed that certificates are perceived by the youth in Nigeria and Somaliland as a vital element in enhancing employability and making applications stand out. In line with Osidipe's (2017) findings, certifications increase the participation of young people in online courses, as they help with increasing their employability chances. The respondents' previous experiences show that they use these diplomas as evidence of gained knowledge, abilities, and progress when applying for job positions. It is in line with Banks and Meinert (2016) 's statement on the preference for certified online courses, which the youth can utilise to increase their chances of being hired and, at the same time, to advance in their careers.

Limitations

There are at least three potential limitations concerning this study. Firstly, the interview respondents for this study were specifically young people who have completed the Butterfly Works Design Thinking course. Because the respondents' profiles are comparable, the results obtained in this study may not be generalised to the youth outside of this sample (Connelly, 2013). But it provides insights and overview of the perspectives of youth in Nigeria and Somaliland on the online certified courses.

Secondly, there were difficulties in finding research respondents. In particular, the number of respondents who returned the questionnaire was lower than expected. At the beginning of the research, a significant sample size of approximately 50 responses were aimed to be gathered, but only 29 respondents filled out the questionnaire. Furthermore, the sample size for the interview was also limited, since out of around 60 alumni of Butterfly Works' Design Thinking course, only a considerable but small size of 10 people were interviewed.

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Lastly, the cultural differences between the researcher and the respondents may have had an impact on the interpretation of the findings (Ansell, 2017). To counteract this, additional questions were asked throughout the interviews to better understand the context, such as how certificates are perceived in their community or what they personally mean for the respondents themselves (Buil et al., 2012).

Recommendations

This section will touch upon some of the recommendations for further improvement of online certified courses and future research. Organisations can improve the certificates they issue to increase the effectiveness of online courses and certificates. Based on the interview and questionnaire respondents opinions, this research found that the content of the program and the skills it provides could be more clearly indicated on the certificate. This would assist in highlighting the respondents' abilities. Secondly, the respondents' performance and a Letter of Recommendation can be included in the certificate to help the respondents be better evaluated during the job application based on the suggestions of the interview respondents. Thirdly, respondents also emphasized the importance of the name of the institution and the course. By promoting their courses and programs through media, organisations can increase their visibility and desirability in the society, which can also motivate the youth to receive a certificate from a prestigious organisation. Lastly, young people stressed that alumni feedback is important in making the certificates outstanding. Organisations can improve the effectiveness and visibility of their online courses by incorporating alumni feedback on their websites.

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Further research to improve online certified courses in content and structure can focus on how to keep online courses up-to-date with technological advancements as well as how to improve the contribution of online courses to specific skills that were mentioned in this research. The findings of this research has highlighted that such features of online courses provide accessibility and focus on specific skills, which make the online courses more desirable. Therefore, organisations can look into ways in which they can improve the use of technological advancements in their online courses; as well as looking into how they can better respond to the needs for specific skills in the job market to serve the youth's interests better.

Lastly, future research is also advised to compare the motivation of young people living in Western and non-Western countries. It is possible to investigate the differences in motivation to enrol in an online course between individualistic and collective societies due to differences in learning experiences (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This could provide insights into the influence of culture and the education system on young people, as well as provide a better understanding about the effects of non-formal education on employability or fighting unemployment around the world in different cultures (Ansell, 2017). Through further similar research, the content of the online courses and the improvement of certificates can be tailored to the needs of the respondents on a national or cultural basis.

In summary, the findings, which are consistent with the literature, provide a general understanding of why the youth enrol in online certified courses. This study demonstrated that young people in Nigeria and Somaliland are turning to non-formal education as an alternative to traditional education to enhance their skills and advance their professions to increase their employment in the job market. This study also provided some suggestions

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based on the results that can help increase the effectiveness of the certificates of online courses. Improvements in online courses and certificates can positively impact the Nigerian and Somalilander youth's employability and provide a chance to improve their life standards. Further research on the effects of non-formal education on employability can lead to possibly similar, and positive results.

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Appendix A

<p>P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht</p> <p>The Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences Utrecht University P.O. Box 80.140 3508 TC Utrecht</p>	<p>Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences</p> <p>Faculty Support Office Ethics Committee</p> <p>Visiting Address</p> <p>Padualaan 14 3584 CH Utrecht</p>
<p>Our Description 22-1288</p> <p>Telephone 030 253 46 33</p> <p>E-mail FETC-fsw@uu.nl</p> <p>Date 13 April 2022</p> <p>Subject Ethical approval</p>	

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Study: Reasons for Nigerian and Somalilander youth to apply in online certified course
Principal investigator: D.L. van Zelst
Supervisor: Tjitske de Groot

The study is approved by the Ethical Review Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University. The approval is based on the documents sent by the researchers as requested in the form of the Ethics committee and filed under number 22-1288. The approval is valid through 20 June 2022. The approval of the Ethical Review Board concerns ethical aspects, as well as data management and privacy issues (including the GDPR). It should be noticed that any changes in the research design oblige a renewed review by the Ethical Review Board.

Yours sincerely,

Peter van der Heijden, Ph.D.
Chair

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Appendix B

Thank you very much for participating in the research. This research aims to understand why the youth apply for online course certifications and the meaning of the online course certificates for the youth. The data will be analysed to determine users' needs and understand the users' experience to improve the certifications to increase the employability of the users'.

Name:

Occupation:

Education statu:

Year of birth:

Online/Offline courses

- Did you take any courses lately? Were they online or offline?
- Why did you and what did you learn? Why did you choose an online/offline course?
Would you recommend it to others? Why?
- What was good about the course and what could be improved?
- Do you think there is a difference between online and offline courses? Why?

Skills for the future

- What kind of skills are you looking to learn via online and offline courses?
- What are the skills you think are needed in the current job market?

Certification

- Did you receive certificates or another evidence of completion of the courses you mentioned earlier? What type?
- What did you do with this certificate/evidence? How have you used certificates like this in the past?
- What is the value/meaning of a certificate like this for you?
- How are certificates/course completion evidence like this perceived in your society?
- What are the benefits of a certificate for you? And towards your future opportunities?
- Is there any difference between obtaining a certificate from an international organization and a local organization based in your country?

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BW DT Course

- Did you ever use your Design Thinking knowledge and certificate in your career or for a job application? In which fields can you use this certificate?
- Which features do you think will improve the Butterfly Works Design Thinking certificate to make it more outstanding in the job application process/your future career?

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Appendix C

Survey Questions:

Thank you for taking your time and answering the questions. The following questions are about understanding your experience and thoughts on course certificates in your country. Please read the questions carefully and choose the answer that suits you most.

Personal Information:

1) The country you are from:

2) The year you were born:

3) Your gender:

4) Your occupation:

5) What kind of diploma's do you have?

- Highschool - Bachelor's - Master's - Ph.D. - Other:

Online/Offline courses

6) Have you enrolled in any courses before?

- Yes - No

7) What were the courses you enrolled in before about?

8) Did you receive a proof of accomplishment after finalising the course and what type was this?

9) In case these were certificates, how many certificates do you have?

- 0 - 1-3 - 4-7 -7 >

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- To expand my network
- To learn something for my personal interest
- Other:

17) In your opinion, why do people in your country want to take online certified courses?
(Please choose 2 options)

- To gain or improve specific skills
- To increase their employability
- To prove their qualification/ learning
- To boost their self-image
- To boost their CV
- To expand their network
- To learn something for their personal interest
- Other:

18) Which features have the most impact on the decision to enrol in the online course?
(Please choose 2 options)

- The curriculum
- The skills which the course provides
- The certificate
- The price of it
- The organization which provided the course

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- Alumni feedback
- The trainers of the course
- Other:

19) Which elements of an online course increase your trust in the certificate? (Please choose 2 options)

- The institution which gives the certificate
- The name of the course
- Length of the course
- The trainers of the course
- Alumni feedback
- The organization
- Others:

20) In your opinion, which features on the certificates make your application more outstanding in job market? (Please choose 2 options)

- The skills that the program provides
- The name of the institution
- The curriculum of the course
- The length of the course
- The name of the course
- Individual-level of performance/commitment

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- Other:

21) Is there any difference between obtaining a certificate from an international organization and a local organization based in your country?

-Yes,

-No, ...

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Appendix D

Information Letter *'Reasons for Nigerian and Somalilander's youth to apply in online certified course'*

Dear Sir, Madam,

Through this letter, we would like to invite you to participate in the research project "*Reasons for Nigerian and Somalilander's youth to apply in online certified course*". This research aims to understand why the youth apply for online course certifications and the meaning of the online course certificates for the youth by asking *'Why do youth of Nigeria and Somaliland apply for the online course certificates?'*. The data will be analysed to determine users' needs and understand the users' experience to improve the certifications to increase the employability of the users'.

The results of the research will be used for the master thesis and report for the Butterfly Works to improve their certificates.

The results of the interviews will be used anonymously. Your personal data will not be accessible by any other person than by the researcher (Demi Leyla van Zelst) and her supervisor of Utrecht University (Tjitske de Groot). The results of the interview will be stored in a secured online environment of Utrecht University. The results will be stored until September 2022.

Participation in the research is voluntary. The participation can be terminated at any time without giving reasons and without consequences for the participant.

The researcher will schedule a meeting and ask questions via Microsoft Teams. The interviews will take approximately 15 or 20 minutes, and the questions will focus on your experiences and thoughts on online course certificates.

The participants can contact the staff of the Butterfly Works Office with any questions about this research at this moment or in the future, who will contact researcher Demi Leyla van Zelst. In case of complaints, the participants can contact the staff of the Butterfly Works office in Amsterdam (inspire@butterflyworks.org or +31 (0) 20 47 11 780).

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Appendix E

Informed Consent *‘A study on the experiences of the Nigerian and Somalilandler youth on certified online courses’*

I declare that I have been informed clearly of the purpose and method of the student research aimed at improvement of the online course certification process.

I agree voluntarily with participation in this research. In doing so, I retain the right to revoke this consent at any moment and without giving a reason. I'm aware that I have the option to leave the interview at any time.

The results of the interviews will be used anonymously. My personal data (name) will not be accessible by any other person than by the researcher (Demi Leyla van Zelst) and her supervisor of Utrecht University (Tjitske de Groot). The results of the interview will be stored in a secured online environment of Utrecht University. The results will be stored until July 2022.

I am aware that if I have any questions about this research, at this moment or in the future, I can ask the staff of the Butterfly Works Office, who will contact researcher Demi Leyla van Zelst. I can contact the staff of the Butterfly Works office in Amsterdam (inspire@butterflyworks.org or +31 (0) 20 47 11 780) in case of complaints.

I understand the information above, and I agree with this.

(Name)

(Place, date)

(Sign)

REASONS FOR YOUTH FROM NIGERA AND SOMALILAND TO APPLY FOR ONLINE CERTIFIED COURSES

Appendix F

Themes:

Reasons to enrol on an online certified course: Respondents were asked about their opinions and experiences regarding the following topics to investigate this theme:

- **Motivation:** Initial motivations of the respondents to apply for an online course.
- **Previous experiences:** The respondents' earlier experiences on certificates in their career or daily life.
- **Advantages and disadvantages of an online course**
- **Expected skills:** The skills that respondents expect to gain from the courses.
- **Evaluation of the course:** The review of the previous courses of the respondents. This sub-heading also includes the recommendations of the respondents.

Future benefits of the online certified courses: Questions about the given themes were addressed to understand better the meaning of the certificates for them and how they believe they are perceived by society:

- **Opportunities:** The possibilities that the certificates might create for youth in their future.
- **Identification of the certificate:** The meaning of certificates in their opinions and how their society perceives certificates.