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Making youth entrepreneurship a viable path

How can TVET institutions help promote entrepreneurship

Report of the UNESCO-UNEVOC
virtual conference
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Moderated by
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Foreword

Providing education, employment opportunities and empowering young people are the three key factors in realizing global progress. Youth unemployment is a growing concern and big challenge and recent figures show that a large number of youth, from different countries and backgrounds, are still facing numerous barriers to employment. Empowering young people to overcome these obstacles is paramount, and governments are currently exploring different avenues that will enable young people to gain access to the labour market and grow professionally and personally. Youth entrepreneurship is one such avenue. Stronger yet, UNESCO has made "fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship" as one of its three priority areas in the UNESCO Strategy for TVET (2016-2021). The Strategy will guide the Organization's work in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and contributes to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In order for TVET stakeholders to play an active role in promoting youth entrepreneurship, more focus should be placed on understanding the nature of entrepreneurship, as well as the obstacles that young entrepreneurs face.

In order to start the ball rolling and promote knowledge and expertise sharing on the topic, UNESCO-UNEVOC organized a virtual conference from 18 to 29 July 2016 on the UNEVOC TVeT Forum. Moderated by Claudia Pompa, this virtual conference discussed and identified the key skills that young entrepreneurs need to develop, in particular with regards to designing and implementing successful youth entrepreneurship programmes. The virtual conference also looked at the challenges that young entrepreneurs face, as well as the programmes and policies that can help overcome these obstacles.

The virtual conference was attended by 146 experts from 58 countries. The high level of participant engagement across the five discussion topics reflected the importance that governments are placing on issues with regards to youth entrepreneurship and employment.

This virtual conference was the sixteenth in a series of moderator-driven discussions introduced by UNESCO-UNEVOC in 2011. Conducted on the

UNEVOC TVeT Forum – a global online community of over 4,500 members – and guided by an expert, these discussions provide a platform for sharing of experiences, expertise and feedback. We would like to thank Claudia Pompa for sharing her expertise with the wider TVET community, which we hope will further the discussion and lead to the successful development and policies which will empower youth entrepreneurs to put their innovative ideas in action. We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to all participants who took the time to share their experiences, knowledge and insights and contributed to the development of this report.

Shyamal Majumdar
Head of UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre

Introduction

Statistics and predictions paint a challenging picture for today's youth; the World Bank estimates that the global economy needs 600 million new jobs over the next ten years just to keep employment rates constant¹; the International Labour Organization (ILO) reports almost 36% of the world's unemployed—nearly 73.3 million people—are young people and, adding under-employed youth, this account trebles the total. Furthermore, over 169 million young people earn less than US\$2 per day, representing more than one-third of the working poor in developing countries².

Youth employment continues to be a key challenge in the economies of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Sub-Saharan Africa, and the European Union (EU), with unemployment rates in many of these regions looming 30%. In Latin America, youth are often stuck in the informal sector—six of every ten jobs available to youth are in the informal sector, forcing approximately 27 million youth in the region into poor quality jobs³.

Clearly, in today and tomorrow's economy, being young and looking for employment is not an easy task.

In this context, youth entrepreneurship can play an important part in facilitating economic development and job creation. While young people often turn to self-employment because they cannot find jobs elsewhere, entrepreneurship can provide them with valuable skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, leadership, teamwork and innovation—all of which remain relevant for the rest of their lives. In general, they gain expertise in areas not incorporated in traditional education, constructing unique careers that resonate outside the typical economic model by pulling in talent from their peers and fostering positive community development.

Considering youth's enormous entrepreneurial potential, governments, practitioners, and policy-makers need to focus more attention on the barriers and challenges that prevent young people from starting and growing successful businesses while at the same time concentrating on policies and programmes that have the ability of unleashing the potential of young entrepreneurs.

1 World Bank. 2013 .

2 ILO. 2015a.

3 ILO. 2015a.



At 27, Lesley Silverthorn Marincola is the founder of Angaza Design, who is working to bring affordable solar home systems to low-income, off-grid families and small businesses in Tanzania.

Defining youth entrepreneurship

Although there is no accepted universal definition of "entrepreneurship," "entrepreneur," or "youth entrepreneurship," for the purpose of this virtual conference entrepreneurship was defined in the broadest sense. The definition used by the Schoof (2006) was adopted, which states:

"Entrepreneurship is the recognition of an opportunity to create value, and the process of acting on this opportunity, whether or not it involves the formation of a new entity. While concepts such as 'innovation' and 'risk taking' in particular are usually associated with entrepreneurship, they are not necessary to define the term."

This definition focuses on behaviour rather than traits, and views entrepreneurship as "a set of behaviours, and an entrepreneur is someone who undertakes these behaviours". A behavioural definition of youth entrepreneurship focuses on what an entrepreneur does and how he or she does it, rather than identifying and classifying specific 'entrepreneurial' traits and qualities, avoiding the suggestion that entrepreneurs are born and not made⁴.

Making youth entrepreneurship a viable path

Youth tend to see entrepreneurship as a viable and desirable path, particularly those from developing countries. A survey of 7,800 youth across twenty-six countries conducted by Deloitte in 2014 unveiled that while 70% of respondents view themselves as working independently at some point in their careers, nearly 82% of those in developing countries expect this independence in the future, compared to 52% of respondents in developed nations⁵. For youth in the developing world, entrepreneurship is seen as a potential catalyst of economic development and job creation.

However, it is important to keep in mind that youth are not a monolithic entity but rather an incredibly diverse group and their different approaches to entrepreneurship and business models they use reflect this.

⁴ Schoof. 2006.
⁵ Deloitte. 2014

In developed economies, entrepreneurs are usually attracted to entrepreneurship due to perceived opportunities, while in developing and emerging economies necessity and lack of alternatives are the main drivers behind the decision to start a business. These entrepreneurs tend to focus on low-skills and easy to enter sectors, as they lack some of the more sophisticated skills needed to create more complex businesses⁶.

Providing young entrepreneurs with the entrepreneurship skills, information, mentoring and the financial support they need in order to become successful entrepreneurs is crucial in order to make entrepreneurship a viable path.

Objectives and scope

From 18 to 29 July 2015, UNESCO-UNEVOC TVeT Forum members and other stakeholders participated in a virtual conference on how to make youth entrepreneurship a viable path. The virtual conference built upon the observations made in the Virtual Conference on Tackling Youth Unemployment through TVET, which only briefly addressed entrepreneurship education. The virtual conference also took place in the context of the launching of UNESCO's Strategy for TVET (2016-2021), which has youth and entrepreneurship as one of its priority areas.

A hundred and forty six participants from 58 countries participated in the virtual conference; 32 from Africa, 7 from Arab States, 25 from Asia and the Pacific, 33 from Europe and North America, and 8 from Latin America and the Caribbean. Sixty-three participants, accounting for 37% of participants, were female. The diversity of participants reflected the global nature of the UNESCO-UNEVOC TVeT forum and ensured a wide range of perspectives on the topic.

Main questions under discussion

The main objective of the virtual Conference was to facilitate a discussion about the key skills that young entrepreneurs need to develop and how to design and implement successful youth entrepreneurship programmes. The virtual conference tried to answer some key questions, including the following:

⁶ YBI. 2013.

- What are some of the key challenges that young entrepreneurs, in different markets and from different backgrounds, face? And how can programmes or policies help them address those challenges?
- What are the key skills that young entrepreneurs need to develop in order to be able to run successful ventures? And what role can TVET providers play in helping develop some of those skills?
- What are some key best practices that we can identify when implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes?

Structure of the discussion

The discussion was organized in a series of threads. The initial discussion focused on the key questions the conference was trying to answer and later on moved to specific topics of interest raised during discussions. Participants were also encouraged to share best practices, examples of successful programmes and relevant resources that could be useful to others.



The Makhzoumi Foundation, in collaboration with UNESCO Beirut, have developed a project in Bekaa for enhancing work and life skills for youth affected by the Syrian crisis. The project helps young men and women establish and manage Artisan businesses as a solution to the problem of unemployment.

Summary of the virtual conference discussions

The discussions focused on three main questions, and as the virtual conference progressed, additional threads were started to investigate important topics raised by participants. This section summarizes the discussions that took place during the two-week virtual conference.

1. Key challenges young entrepreneurs face

What are some of the key challenges that young entrepreneurs, in different markets and from different backgrounds, face? How can programmes or policies help them address those challenges?

Considering the potential positive impact youth entrepreneurship can have on livelihoods and employment creation, practitioners, policy-makers and governments should focus more attention on the barriers and challenges that prevent young people from starting and growing successful businesses. While limited access to capital still constitutes a major hurdle for young entrepreneurs, other barriers may be just as detrimental to the development of a business. In fact, capital without adequate support systems, know-how and mentorship can quickly become lost investment.

Traditional education system adverse to entrepreneurship: structural changes and technological developments have fundamentally changed labour markets across the world and will continue to do so. These changes have enabled the emergence of new economic models, potentially creating opportunities for new forms of entrepreneurship. However, traditional education and training systems remain unaltered. Curricula has not been appropriately updated to reflect these economic shifts, and school systems still predominantly focus on preparing students for employment work rather than training them how to develop entrepreneurial mind-sets.

Participants identified two main areas that need to be transformed in order to provide 'fit for purpose' programmes to promote entrepreneurship: i) teacher training; and ii) curricula. As one participant highlighted

"A major challenge that young entrepreneurs face is the provision of fit for purpose TVET programmes and initiatives that are entrepreneurially fit and responding to opportunity, need and outcomes."
(Rónán Haughey, Ireland)

- **Teacher training:** many participants identified the challenge of requiring teachers who are capable of providing entrepreneurial training. Teachers usually have no prior training in entrepreneurship, no experience running a business, and limited or non-existent experience within the private sector. Those who do have this experience are the exception, not the norm. As one participant described

"For teachers, you can't really give what you don't have. Most teachers are not entrepreneurs, hence, they can't really inspire their students."
(John Okewole, Nigeria)

Fortunately, participants also reported that an increasing number of lecturers and trainers are starting to understand the benefits of including entrepreneurial skills as part of the curricula and have shown increased interest in dedicated training. Working with mentors, a topic explored in greater detail later in this report, was also seen as an opportunity to help improve the situation.

- **Curriculum design:** several participants highlighted the importance of including creativity and innovation as part of curricula design in order to ensure 'fit for purpose' programmes. Focusing curricula on 'learning by doing' rather than on theoretical study of entrepreneurship was also mentioned as important as

"Entrepreneurship needs not only build the body of knowledge but also the body of practice."
(Amina Idris, Nigeria)

However, this remains a challenging task. Simulations and games were identified as specific methodologies that could be used as part of the curricula development process. As one of the participants stated

"For entrepreneurship education to be effective, it needs to be an integral part of a student's experience and not an add-on, and should focus on inculcating an entrepreneurial mind-set and promoting self-employment as a viable career option; that is, it should encourage

innovation and ensure that students develop confidence, flexibility, enterprise awareness, resilience and risk-orientation from the outset."
(John W. Simiyu, Kenya)

Inadequate skills: while young entrepreneurs are often characterised by their enthusiasm, they tend to lack the skills – technical, business, and soft – required to start, operate and grow their businesses. This lack of skills severely hinders entrepreneurs' opportunities and the potential for growth. Major emphasis was placed on the need to provide the 'right business skills' to youth interested in starting a business. Participants also highlighted the importance of a 'blended skills set' that allows young entrepreneurs to assess and take advantage of market opportunities, to face dynamic and constant changes, and to cope with complex and difficult situations. A comprehensive list of the skills discussed is provided in the next chapter.

Market constrains: young people face specific constraints in starting and operating a business, but they are also affected by the challenges that affect the sector as a whole. These include poor infrastructure, adverse legal and regulatory frameworks, limited market opportunities, political instability, and corruption.

- **Regulatory environments:** Bureaucracy, red tape, high costs and difficulties of registering a business, and legal frameworks that work unfavourably for small and medium enterprises are listed as some of the challenges young entrepreneurs face.
- **Infrastructure:** In particular contexts, poor infrastructure – or the lack of – continues to restrain the operation and growth of youth businesses with a direct impact on their bottom line. Access to transportation and markets, reliable power supply, and basic services are some of the challenges faced by young entrepreneurs.

Lack of access to experience and networks: skills, knowledge and experience will often determine the success of a business. Unfortunately, young entrepreneurs have limited or no access to the networks and support they need to run a business, which can lead to a profound sense of isolation. The role of mentors can help mitigate the situation and provide access to the networks and experiences young entrepreneurs need.



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UNAMID's DDR CLIPs seek to bolster peace building initiatives through training sessions for "at risk" youth to develop alternative livelihoods through income-generating activities and vocational skills training.

Access to capital and financial instruments: as previously mentioned, access to capital remains a significant constraint for entrepreneurs, particularly for those operating in developing countries. Entrepreneurs might not have access to banks and/or the adequate financial instruments to support them. Furthermore, bank's strict set of criteria for financing often means loans are unattainable for young entrepreneurs who rarely have any collateral or credit history. Often, if youth are able to access capital, they do so at high rates that limit their ability to cover the loan or make further investments. These challenges tend to be exacerbated for female entrepreneurs and young people operating businesses in rural areas. As one participant emphasized

"The lower income portion of our society might have huge and smart ideas which can turn out to be successful but due to the lack of financing, their ideas die."
(Pedro David Puente, Ecuador)

Cultural perceptions about entrepreneurship: Cultural perceptions about entrepreneurship, and particularly young entrepreneurs, may often be a monumental challenge to overcome and a make-or-break factor for programmes promoting youth entrepreneurship. Certain cultures – where failure is considered a necessary part of the learning process – are more prone to accepting a risk-taking approach. Cultures dominated

by a negative perception of failure can have a profound impact on young people's interest in pursuing entrepreneurship. Several participants highlighted how risk-adverse behaviour and fear of failure are often related to traditional education systems that do not encourage entrepreneurship.

Young people are also often affected by perceptions regarding age and gender. Participants reported that some times entrepreneurs might not be taken seriously due to their age, and that in certain contexts men might not be accustomed to or feel comfortable dealing with female entrepreneurs.

2. The skills young entrepreneurs need

What are the key skills that young entrepreneurs need to develop in order to be able to run prosperous ventures?

Many young people, especially in developing economies, turn to entrepreneurship due to a lack of available job opportunities. While they may not stay on the entrepreneur track, the experience of developing the hard, soft and technical skills necessary to start and run a business brings increasing returns on investment throughout their careers. Development programmes that feature skills training,

especially those skills that can be used beyond the end of the project, are more attractive to youth, their families, and their communities.

Participants identified several types of skills young people need to acquire and develop in order to become successful entrepreneurs:

Entrepreneurial skills: These are the specific skills required to start and operate a business venture. Entrepreneurship skills are those associated with competencies in opportunity identification and creation, the ability to capitalise on identified opportunities and the range of skills involved in developing and implementing business plans to realize these opportunities⁷. Although often related to management and leadership skills, entrepreneurial skills are distinct. Some of the entrepreneurial skills identified are as follows:

- Idea generation /visioning
- Identifying and acting upon potential opportunities
- Business planning
- Market analysis and assessment
- Risk management
- Resilience
- Networking
- Creativity and innovation

Business skills: These are understood as the required skills to operate and manage a business venture. Participants identified the following business skills young entrepreneurs should develop:

- Marketing, sales and customer service
- Financial planning and management
- Pricing
- Managerial skills including management of personnel
- Accounting
- Commercialisation understood as the process by which a new product or service is introduced into the general market

Soft skills: These are defined as the non-job specific skills related to an individual's ability to operate effectively in the workplace. These skills are crosscutting across jobs and sectors and relate to personal competences and social competences⁸.

- Critical and analytical thinking
- Leadership

- Communication
- Team building
- Work –life balance
- Decision-making
- Time management
- Problem Solving

A key challenge in terms of skills, particularly soft skills, is the lack of agreement on definitions and terminology inclusive of the lack of assessment frameworks and tools with which to measure the development of those skills across different international contexts. While some progress has been done in this regards, the portfolio of evidence needs to be enlarged.

3. Different support systems for different types of entrepreneurs

How can TVET support different types of entrepreneurs? Should support systems⁹ differentiate between necessity entrepreneurs and opportunity entrepreneurs? And if so, how?

While most practitioners generally are aware of the importance of a detailed profile of students/ participants, in the case of youth, this aspect tends to be underestimated. Too often we assume that all youth have the same desires and aspirations across the world; youth are not a monolithic entity, but rather a very diverse group, and the different approaches and business models they use are a reflection of this diversity.

It is important to make the distinction between necessity and opportunity driven entrepreneurs. We use the definition provided by YBI that states **necessity-driven entrepreneurs** are pushed into starting a business because they have no other work options and need a source of income, while **opportunity-driven entrepreneurs** are pulled into entrepreneurship by the prospect of opportunity.

Participants acknowledged the need to make this distinction and highlighted that often necessity-driven entrepreneurs face greater vulnerabilities than opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, and programmes need to take this into consideration. One conference participant described the differences of implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes with different types of entrepreneurs:

7 Chell, E. 2013.
8 EU Commission. 2015.

9 Understood as entrepreneurship skills training, access to information, mentoring and financial support

"Opportunity entrepreneurs will sign up for a course with us via a web-form they have found via social media or some other form, whereas necessity entrepreneurs, in our case, will come to us from a job search agency and will require more government financial assistance for living and rental assistance. Necessity entrepreneurs may take us up more on our mentoring solutions whereas opportunity entrepreneurs may already be surrounded by success via family, friends, school, religious or sporting connections or their larger circle of contacts. Whereas we tend to ensure there is full understanding of the business, financial and legal risks with necessity entrepreneurs, with opportunity entrepreneurs we can loosen the reins a little and let them fly as they have other means of support".

(Antonio Dragone, Australia)

Youth entrepreneurship support systems should not only differentiate between the types of entrepreneurs but also among different age-cohorts (15-19, 20-24, 25 and above), gender, and context.

Age cohorts: Entrepreneurs at different ages have varied literacy levels, skills and needs that should be taken into account. Younger entrepreneurs might need extra support in terms of soft and technical skills and how to initiate and mobilize their business, while older entrepreneurs tend to need more support in

"Necessity-driven entrepreneurs are pushed into starting a business because they have no other work options and need a source of income, while opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are pulled into entrepreneurship by the prospect of opportunity."

(Youth Business International, 2013)

terms of business skills and growing and scaling their businesses. Another conference participant shared her experience about different needs young entrepreneurs face depending on their age:

"There may be differences in the challenges that younger, as opposed to the 'older,' youth face. A very practical example: I am currently running a training programme for young people aged 18 to 35 in Ghana. The youngest participant (20) struggles with low self-esteem, afraid to ask questions and ask for help from her network (fear of failure!). She also believes she lacks the necessary skills (technical skills) to pursue her business idea and relies on others to train her. On the other hand, we have the older group (30+) who 'suffers' from overconfidence - thinking they can do it all alone, not really listening to their (potential) customers



Asma Ahmad Sheikh was the second place winner of the UNEVOC Skills in Action award in 2015. After taking training in stitching and enterprise development, she now not only runs her own business but also community business centre in her rural village, helping women and men find training opportunities, set up their businesses, improve their lives.

and really believing that their idea is the best—often stating lack of finance as their main challenge - while in fact it is the product-market fit that is not there.

So these two entrepreneurs, while at a similar stage of their business, have different training needs."

(Lisa Freiburg, Ghana)

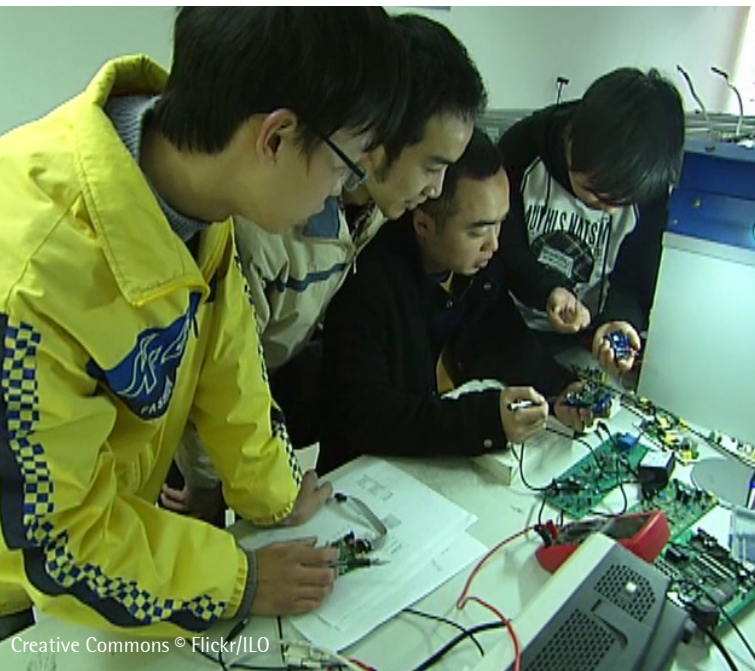
Gender: Often female entrepreneurs will have different needs than their male counterpart, particularly those based in countries and/or societies where the freedom and status of women has been challenged. Programmes need to take into account that female entrepreneurs might require safe spaces to meet and a training curricula that not only focuses on market opportunities, but particularly on those that could be undertaken by women without putting their security - or that of their families - at risk.

Context: Contexts not only differ widely between countries but also within them. In these scenarios, regional factors such as culture, ethnicity, language, rural or urban settings should be taken into account when doing programme design and implementation.

A thorough training needs assessment is fundamental to designing support systems that reflect the different needs that participants have.

4. Mentoring programmes

How can TVET institutions work with different stakeholders in order to increase access to experience and committed mentors? What are key aspects



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Yang Shumbo, a Chinese electronic student, has developed a device to save energy and has since started his own business the Greener Business Option (GBO) pilot project, an ILO Green Jobs Programme initiative.

that need to be taken into account when designing and implementing mentoring programmes?

The "soft support" provided by mentors is just as important as the technical skills young entrepreneurs need to start, maintain and grow their businesses. The importance of mentors and mentoring programmes was reiterated throughout the virtual conference.

Although there is no universal agreed definition of mentorship, the most appropriate ones are the definitions provided by Harrington and St-Jean and Audet. Harrington defines entrepreneurial mentoring as the relationship that involves one entrepreneur acting as a 'critical friend' or 'guide' helping to oversee the career and development of a less experienced entrepreneur, while St-Jean and Audet describe entrepreneurial mentoring as a form of support relationship between a novice entrepreneur (the mentee) and an experienced entrepreneur (the mentor)¹⁰. Through the relationship the mentee is able to develop as both an entrepreneur and a person¹¹.

While the advantages of mentoring programmes were widely recognized by participants, the challenges of designing and implementing effective programmes were the topic of debate. Key aspects that need to be taken into account

¹⁰ Harrington, A. 1999.

¹¹ St-Jean, E., Audet, J. 2009.

when developing mentoring programmes were identified by participants and are listed below:

- **Determining the desired outcomes of the programme:** the basis of any mentoring programme should include identifying needs and formulating appropriate goals for the development of the programme.
- **Defining the type of mentoring needed:** programmes need to determine if the mentoring process will be formal, informal, one-on-one, group, physical, virtual, etc. Different types of mentoring require different types of partnerships and logistical arrangements, and can lead to diverse outcomes.
- **Setting up partnerships:** For mentoring programmes to be effective, organizations must work with and have access to different stakeholders who can provide the type of expertise and experience that young entrepreneurs need. Participants highlighted that different business ideas could require different types of mentors, i.e. technical mentors vis-à-vis business mentors.
- **Recruiting mentors:** identifying the right mentor is important. A key aspect of a successful mentoring programme is found in outlining and discussing the goals, expectations and anticipated outcomes of the process. Mentors need to be very clear about their roles in order to prevent misunderstandings down the line. Mentors must know clearly the type of support they are expected to provide and the amount of time they need to dedicate. Outlining from the start the frequency and structure of meetings could help in this regard.
- **Training of mentors:** an often-overlooked aspect is the importance of training mentors before they start the process. Mentors need to be aware and know the kind of questions they will be asked, the type of tasks they can ask mentees, and the time restraints on them and their mentees.
- **Follow up support:** both mentors and mentees need to have a certain level of support during the process of mentoring. This can help identify problems early and provide answers to questions that might arise throughout the engagement.

- **Create feedback loops, evaluate, and learn:** programmes need to ensure they create opportunities for feedback loops and evaluate results regularly to promote learning and develop forward strategies that are informed by these experiences.

Questions regarding the transferability, scalability and sustainability of mentorship programmes were also raised as these topics require further exploration.

5. Key best practices when implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes

What are some key best practices that we can identify when implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes?

Youth entrepreneurship can offer an innovative pathway to economic growth for young people. However, youth entrepreneurship is still a relatively new phenomenon and there is little definitive evidence supporting or refuting the effectiveness of different support models. As practitioners continue to build evidence over time, we can start to identify key best practices and recommendations for implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes. Those identified are listed below:

Mentors should be seen as a fundamental component of a youth entrepreneurship programme: As previously discussed, mentors can provide access to expertise, knowledge and networks that otherwise might be unavailable to young entrepreneurs. Mentors provide advice and recommendations based on real business experience and their knowledge can be invaluable to the entrepreneurs.

'Blended skills training' is key: Entrepreneurs face multiple challenges in a constantly changing economy. To overcome these challenges and be successful in their ventures, entrepreneurs require a diverse toolkit that includes entrepreneurial, business, technical and soft skills. Finding the 'right mix' of skills still remains a challenge in the sector.

Programmes should include a project work component: As described by a participant

"This [project work component] is where the learners are required to design projects of their own. It involves finding and presenting project proposals and working with a supervisor through the semester to develop the project, market and sell the products and do an analytic report on the process. This is a learning model that makes the young learners to develop and put to use what they have practiced. The supervisors/lecturer guides them through the process. While they are grouped, everyone is encouraged to contribute, which is a way to teach human relation and collaborative skills." (John Okewole, Nigeria).

Instil the idea that failure is part of success: Cultural perceptions about entrepreneurship, and in particular failure, were noted as challenges many young entrepreneurs face. Exposing young entrepreneurs to the idea that failure is an important part of success and a key learning opportunity is an important component that programmes should incorporate.

Promote creativity and innovation: Creativity and innovation should be promoted as a transversal component of any programme. As one participant highlighted

"In order to provide the right conditions for new ideas to come to the surface connections with the real world, interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial cooperation stand out as crucial elements in the equation." (Rónán Haughey, Ireland)

Programmes structures need to remain flexible and adaptable to change.

"It takes a village...": Supporting successful entrepreneurs from the spark of an idea to starting



The Zingira Youth Bunge is a group of 40 Kenyan youth that have made a business of turning trash into jewelry, baskets, furniture and handbags. By recycling trash from Lake Victoria, the youth are demonstrating a new, environmentally-friendly spirit of entrepreneurship.

and then growing a business requires the combined effort of multiple actors and stakeholders: teachers, entrepreneurs, students, mentors, industry, local authorities, community organisations, governments. Cross-sectoral collaboration and partnerships play a fundamental role in delivering the tailored support young entrepreneurs need.

Exchange ideas: As previously mentioned, the youth entrepreneurship sector is still building evidence on effectiveness and methods. TVET practitioners, industry members, policy makers and other relevant stakeholders should be able to exchange ideas, experiences, practices and learning regularly in order to increase the knowledge base and information on entrepreneurship education, including role of TVET institutions.

Programmes need to be flexible and adaptable: As new evidence continues to be studied, practices are shared, and technological changes progress, programmes need to ensure they remain flexible and adaptable to incorporate best practices and lessons learnt.

Conclusions and recommendations

The virtual conference provided a unique opportunity to share knowledge and experience regarding youth entrepreneurship. Participants confirmed the importance of the topic and the need to explore further questions raised during the conference.

Young entrepreneurs face a series of challenges which vary depending on the context, market and type of economy in which they operate. Hence, support systems should be designed and implemented while accounting for the distinctive needs of different types of entrepreneurs. Issues like gender and cultural perceptions should also be taken into account during programme design.

In terms of skills training, participants highlighted the importance of providing young entrepreneurs with a variety of skills that will allow them to overcome the different challenges they face. Entrepreneurs require a diverse toolkit that includes entrepreneurial, business, technical and soft skills.

Mentorship has been identified as a key element that all youth entrepreneurship programmes need

to consider. Mentors are able to provide access to knowledge, skills and networks that are not usually available to young entrepreneurs, and concurrently offer a unique business perspective. Specific recommendations on how to design mentoring programmes were provided.

Participants also shared best practices when designing and implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes and provided examples of successful on-going programmes from which others could learn.

Despite the richness of the discussion, certain issues need to be explored further and in more detail:

- Designing 'fit for purpose' entrepreneurship programmes that promote creativity and innovation as part of the curricula;
- Providing training and support to teachers and trainers interested in developing an entrepreneurial curricula;
- Designing and implementing effective mentoring programmes with strong linkages to the private sector;
- Ensuring that experiences, practices and learning are regularly shared among trainers and practitioners.

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Participation

Number of participants: 146
 Number of countries from which
 participants came: 58

UNEVOC Network Members: 42 (29%)
 Male: 92
 Female: 54

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About the moderator

Claudia Pompa



Claudia is a specialist on workforce and skills development, with a particular experience in youth entrepreneurship, vocational training, and small and medium sized enterprise development. She has twelve years of experience as an international development consultant

and technical adviser and has worked extensively in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, and the Arab States. Her work involved designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating complex development programmes, particularly focused on entrepreneurship and business development strategies and programmes, across a number of government and non-government organizations.



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