ACTION GUIDE 1: SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS

PREVIEW

This is a preview document of Secondary Education and Skills thematic guide which is part of the What Works? A Guide to Action series. The preview aims to provide an introductory overview of the theme while it should not be considered as reference as a full chapter of the guide will be launched soon. What Works? A Guide to Action is a joint product of Generation Unlimited and Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth.

Contents
SECTION 1: THE STRATEGIC CASE
INTRODUCTION: DEFINING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE
SCOPE AND RATIONALE FOR PRIORITIZING SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS
LANDSCAPE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS
   Trends
   Challenges
   Opportunities and benefits
SECTION 2: WHAT WORKS
   Solutions
   Common features and characteristics of successful solutions
   Breakthrough ideas
SECTION 3: CALL TO ACTION
   Policy and decisionmakers
   Project and programming teams
   Youth and practitioners
PREVIEW OF SECTION 1: THE STRATEGIC CASE
INTRODUCTION – DEFINING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The scope: The future of children and young people is being shaped by new technologies, fast changing labour markets, migration, conflict, and environmental changes. All young people need access to quality education and learning that develops skills, knowledge, attitudes and values which will enable them to navigate a complex world and which makes it more likely that they will succeed in school, work, and life. In low income countries in particular, secondary education (including technical secondary education) has the potential to be a key platform for young people to enter the world of work, start a business and have positive impact in their communities but only if they have the skills they need – the foundational, transferable, digital, entrepreneurial and job-specific skills they need to break cycles of intergenerational poverty. Secondary education can contribute to their own individual development, as well as broad-based social and economic growth.

The challenge: To succeed within this current and future environment, all young people need access to quality education and learning that develops skills, knowledge, attitudes and values and enables them to become successful life-long learners who can learn, un-learn, and relearn; find and retain productive work; make wise decisions; and positively engage in their communities.

However, many young people remain out of school or do not have access to quality learning opportunities with large inequalities among several categories. The World Bank’s 2018 World Development Report argues that the learning crisis has multiple causes: poor service delivery in schools and communities, low bureaucratic capacity, and policies that are not aligned toward learning for all. Furthermore, the integration of education and skills development systems within integrated employment policies is also an issue. Education and learning systems worldwide are constrained in delivering positive outcomes for children and young people and remain mostly focused on the acquisition of knowledge that is not sufficient to prepare them to meet challenges and seize opportunities now and in the future.

The COVID19 pandemic impacted on gains made in access and learning for all children and young people. For example, the World Bank estimates that without effective and intentional action, the disruption to education during COVID19 could result in a reduction of $872 in yearly earnings for young people – that amounts to an unprecedented $10 trillion loss in earnings overall. There is now a once in a generation opportunity to re-imagine education, especially for the most marginalized children and young people. Only half of all young people currently participate in formal or non-formal secondary education and by 2030, an estimated 825 million children are expected to leave school without basic secondary level skills. There is a need for a radical re-think of what works to transform traditional curricula, teaching methods and strict school timetables that have become less relevant to the current needs of children and young people and those of the market.

The development of foundational, transferable, digital, entrepreneurial and job-specific skills is essential in today’s rapidly changing labour market since:

- 39 per cent of employers in nine diverse countries (including high-income countries) claim that a leading reason for entry-level vacancies in diverse economies is due in part to a skills shortage.
Across the globe, about 500 million young people are unemployed, underemployed or working insecure jobs, often in the informal sector.\textsuperscript{v}

21 per cent of young people (255 million) in the developing world – three quarters of whom are women – are not in employment, education or training.\textsuperscript{vi,vii,viii,ix}

Over 33 per cent of students between the ages of 13 and 15 experience bullying from their peers.\textsuperscript{x}

Over 31 million children have been forcibly displaced, including some 13 million child refugees.\textsuperscript{xi}

In many instances, and due to gender and social norms and discriminating practices, labour force participation of young women\textsuperscript{xii} and of young people and young people with disabilities is also constrained.\textsuperscript{xiii}

Low-skill workers are growing in number, while job-market demands for workers with transferable skills, ICT skills and mastery of new technologies remain unmet.

The opportunity: Learning inequalities\textsuperscript{xiv} start early in the primary school cycle, or even before children start school. Thus achieving a target – central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – of ensuring all children, regardless of circumstance, are learning the basics by 2030, will require a step-change in progress that will not be achieved by ‘business as usual’\textsuperscript{xv}.

Recognising the commitment that no target will be met unless met for all, a particular focus is needed on those who face disadvantages due to poverty, gender, where they live, and whether they have a disability\textsuperscript{xvi, xvii}.

A vulnerable population include youth at risk or already into child labour. They may have dropped out of school or do not benefit from the learning experience because of their workloads. They are exposed to risks and hazards, and the range of skills they get on the job is most of the time too narrow to allow them to progress later in their work life. Youth at risk of child labour require interventions that combine social, education and livelihood interventions to ensure their protection in a sustainable manner\textsuperscript{xviii}.

There is an urgent need to **expand, rethink and transform education and learning systems** to provide all children and young people, especially those who are marginalised and in conflict and emergency settings, with quality learning opportunities that include the skills they need to succeed in school, work, and life. **Transferable skills**, also known as core skills, **life skills, 21st century skills, soft skills, or socio-emotional skills**\textsuperscript{xix} allow children and young people to become agile, adaptive learners and citizens equipped to navigate personal, academic, social and economic challenges. Transferable skills also support crisis-affected children to cope with trauma and build resilience in the face of adversity. […]

**PREVIEW OF SECTION 2: WHAT WORKS?**

**SOLUTIONS**

Invest in the implementation of multiple learning pathways for secondary-age young people

- Include alternative learning programmes in education sector plans to ensure that they are costed and budgeted for, thus ensuring sustainability.
• Ensure that alternative programmes lead to quality learning comparable to mainstream options and to certification.
• Adapt time frames and demands to the needs of out-of-school or at-risk adolescents to facilitate enrolment and academic success by adopting flexible time frames and reducing the opportunity costs of participation while supporting adolescents in fulfilling their right to education.
• Contextualize innovation so it targets the specific barriers that keep young people from accessing education in a given context.
• Use early warning systems to make sure adolescents are channelled into alternative education programmes before they drop out and to minimize drop-out from alternative programmes.
• Integrate with the mainstream (formal) education system so that adolescents have the possibility to go back to regular schools when their circumstances change.

Box Spotlight: TVET as a Learning Pathway

One of the challenges to developing effective pathways for students who may have dropped-out of school, come from TVET backgrounds or have generally had patchy initial schooling, relates to the lack of adequate preparation and support for them to pursue further learning. Young people in secondary programmes should be acquire skills necessary both for the world of work (esp in TVET programmes), but also further learning and civic participation. There are examples of diverse ‘bridging’ programmes that ensure that initial TVET equips students with a sufficient range of knowledge and skills to support further/lifelong learning. Such bridging programmes may offer study skills, basic skills (eg literacy or numeracy), transversal skills or skills/knowledge on specific fields of study.

There are several models of bridging programmes that have been adopted by different countries in the world. Eg in Brazil there are two types of upper secondary TVET provision that combine general and vocational courses: i. integrated offering of academic and vocational courses within the same programme of study in the same school; or concomitant, whereby students pursue a complementary technical programme at the same time as a general upper secondary one in a separate school. In Denmark, the EUX programme integrates workplace training with general school-based courses, leading students to complete a skilled workers’ certificate and general upper secondary diploma.

Strengthening the systems for skill development

• Work with governments to strengthen education systems through policies and plans for market relevant learning and skills development in secondary education for all learners, in particular for the most vulnerable.
• Establish systematic skills anticipation systems to identify occupations and competencies in demand, based on research and consultations with representatives of employers and workers.
• Articulate vocational education around identified occupations and competencies, leading to assessments and certificates recognised by the private sector.
• Review and improve the status of teachers and instructors in a comprehensive manner, in line with ILO-UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers.
• Promote a “permeable” system with a strong articulation between formal and non-formal education and re-entry points to formal education and/or training, and frameworks for the recognition, validation, and accreditation of non-formal learning outcomes.
• Promote the alignment of education and employment policies, and ensure strong cross-sectoral co-ordination between Government institutions to help address the multiple challenges and deprivations that together exclude many young people from learning and decent work opportunities.
• For children above the minimum age for employment, provide programmes of quality apprenticeship with a guaranteed quality of learning, while the rights and entitlements of apprentices are protected.
• Ensure education and training and systems support and facilitate effective transition to decent work through multiple strategies including career and vocational guidance.

Improving teaching and learning of holistic skills
• Support the development and inclusion of a holistic set of skills in the curriculum.
• Design and implement professional development programmes for teachers that equip them with learner centered, gender-responsive, and age-appropriate pedagogies that support the development of a holistic set of skills.
• Support the assessment of a set of holistic skills through different modalities (formative, summative, etc)

Supporting enabling environments
• Promote good governance and accountability mechanisms in schools, including community engagement, as well as participation of parents, children and young people in schools or other appropriate institutions.
• Establish positive, safe, non-violent, inclusive and enabling learning environments for children and young people within their institutions.
• Provide psycho-social support to children and young people in in development and humanitarian settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowering young (15-26) through personal and skills development to incubate innovation for positive social change in Ethiopia and Uganda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SmartUp Factory project aims to create an enabling environment where marginalized young men and women aged 17-26 are empowered through personal and skills development to incubate innovation for positive social change. The programme has the following objectives: (i) to create an inclusive, safe, inspiring, young people friendly and enabling space for young people to innovate and develop skills, using young people-led approaches, with a special emphasis on girls and women; (ii) to support young people, especially girls, to interact, network and access opportunities that allow them realize their dreams and enter meaningful employment; and (iii) to strengthen the leadership capacity of young people, especially girls and women, to effectively participate, engage in decision-making processes on issues that affect them. Through dedicated training, mentoring, peer-to-peer support and peer learning, and access to tools and resources, participants are provided an enabling environment to develop innovative solutions that address the challenges they face every day. To ensure that participants have the tools and resources they need to create change in their communities, each Smartup Factory is well resourced with space and equipment. In addition to this, Smartup training provides a menu of courses which young people can choose to support their ‘personal roadmap’. Some of the courses are compulsory, others optional.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eliminating gender barriers to access and learning
Across both of these priorities, there is an overarching gender focus that has specific requirements including:

- **Enabling multiple learning pathways for girls** requires consideration of demand-side innovations such as cash transfer programmes and scholarships, reducing the distance to secondary school and improving the gender balance amongst teachers.

- **Developing skills relevant for life and work** includes incentives for older out-of-school girls to access non-formal education skills development, apprenticeship opportunities and life skills to develop self-efficacy and self-esteem.

- **Improving learning outcomes** requires gender-responsive teaching and learning with provision of advocacy and technical assistance to reforms to implement gender-responsive pedagogies, curricula and materials.

**Economic empowerment of adolescent girls is key to future success**

CAMFED Tanzania aims to tackle multiple dimensions of disadvantage for adolescent girls who make it to secondary school in rural communities. The support targets a range of barriers to girls’ secondary education at an age when they are at a great risk of dropping out due to factors such as poverty, early marriage and teenage pregnancy. It also provides further support to tackle the barriers that marginalized girls face within schools. The intervention model comprises five integrated elements of financial skills, supplementary learning, life skills development, mentoring by successful previous beneficiaries and psychosocial support. Although this approach requires higher costs, experimental evaluation of the programme demonstrated good value for money. [xii]

[...]

---


[xii] Young women’s labour force participation is 16.6 percentage points lower than that of young men (Mansuy, M. and Werquin, P., 2015; World Bank, 2018). Young people with disabilities have lower employment rates than young people without disabilities across all societies (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).


[xix] These terminologies are often used interchangeably and sometimes include differing sets of skills. The issue of terminology is addressed in the Framework.
