

Africa Knows! Conference Panel G41: Youth employment, knowledge and the labour markets; knowledge and society (Edukans, INCLUDE, ISCTE-IU Lisbon and Advance Afrika)

Introductory QUIZ

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We believe that in this virtual room, we all know the most striking statistics behind youth employment challenge in Africa but we would like to use the latest available evidence to test some of this knowledge with you today, so we invite you to actively participate in the quiz that follows.

So we all know, that Africa's working-age population is projected to increase to almost 1 billion by 2030 (from 705 million in 2018). At this rate of growth, Africa needs to create almost 12 million new jobs annually to prevent rising unemployment, however only a quarter (3.1 million) of these jobs are being actually and formally created every year (AfDB, 2019).

Youth unemployment is highest in North Africa and the Middle East while sub-Saharan Africa has a youth underemployment problem rather than a youth unemployment problem. It is simply because young people do not have the luxury of not working (Fox & Thomas, 2016; ILO, 2019). This leads to youth engaging in informal employment. So my first question to you is:

1. What proportion of the employed youth is currently engaged in informal economy in Sub-Saharan Africa? *[one answer possible]*
 - a. 50%
 - b. 75%
 - c. 89%
 - d. 96%

The correct answer is D. According to 2020 ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth, close to 96% of employed youth in Sub-Saharan Africa is affected by informality. One of the main needs is to create more formal jobs. But this is the demand side problem.

In our panel today, we zoom into the supply side of the labour market. In our first panel, we will look particularly at technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and traditional apprenticeship.

TVET is one of the most popular avenues through which workplace-based learning can be provided (Akoojee, 2016; Hagos Baraki & van Kemenade, 2013; Hailu, 2012). National governments usually regulate TVET, which is offered by both public and private sector training providers and can be funded by donors, national governments or through public-private partnerships (Oviawe, 2018). Most of TVET in Africa incorporate a period of workplace-based learning through an internship component. However, the scope of TVET in Africa is limited and internships tend to be concentrated in the formal sector (Akoojee, 2016);

Regarding Informal apprenticeship, it is often an option for those pursuing trades in the informal sector (Adams et al., 2013; Filmer & Fox, 2014). Informal apprenticeships are offered by master

craftpersons operating in the informal sector and the role of governments, donors and civil society organisations has been mostly minimal (Adams et al., 2013).

Despite its potential, TVET is facing a number of challenges. Firstly, TVET is regarded as an alternative for weaker students and is associated with lower-paying jobs with limited options for progress. Secondly, TVET systems in Africa are hampered by the poor quality of training facilities, trainers, equipment and curricula (Sorensen et al., 2017, Andreoni, 2018; Leyaro & Joseph, 2019). Thirdly, TVET is underfunded and is a low priority for African governments. Finally, there is a gender bias among the TVET programmes. So my second question to you is:

2. According to you, what is the proportion of women apprentice in the 15-34 age category across Africa? *[one answer possible]*
 - a. 5%
 - b. 12%
 - c. 24%
 - d. 47%

The correct answer is B: only 12% of women in that age group have been an apprentice, but what is also important to mention is that across Africa only 18% of individuals in the 15-34 age category have ever been a formal apprentice. There is broad consensus that there are fewer opportunities for formal TVET and it is the informal or traditional apprenticeship system which is the main source of workplace-based learning for young Africans (Adams et al., 2013; Fox & Filmer, 2014).

The review of evidence on TVET in Africa conducted for INCLUDE this year by Ismail and Mujuru concludes, among other, that quality basic education is an essential requirement for the success of TVET, informal apprenticeships or other skills development programmes. And that brings us to our second panel, which will zoom into the importance of skills (life skills, soft skills), as well as nurturing talent of the young people.

Skills training, including TVET programs, aims at preparing young people for the labour market thus focus primarily on technical competencies. Yet, it is now widely recognized that soft skills, as well as life skills are crucial for young people to get jobs or to run successful businesses (see for example Montalvao et. al. 2017; YEF 2017). There is a general need to find successful models for promoting soft and life skills, as well as natural talent of young people, and to integrate them all into formal education systems and work-based learning programs for large-scale impact. But what we are actually talking about? So, my third question to you is then:

3. What are soft skills? *[one answer possible]*
 - a. People skills
 - b. Social skills
 - c. Communication skills
 - d. Social intelligence
 - e. All of the above

All right, there was no wrong answer here. The most correct answer is E: there are a lot of definitions of soft skills from different papers, so we can say that it is all of the above and in general it is about “being super social at work”. The concept of life skills is complementary to soft skills. Life skills are also about communication, but also about assertiveness, self-awareness, or informed decision-making (Nasheeda, Abdullah, Kraus, & Ahmed, 2019).

My final point and nearly last question to you goes back to the demand side of the labour market for youth. My fourth question to you is:

4. What sectors are currently employing most African youth? *[one answer possible]*
 - a. Services
 - b. Manufacturing
 - c. Agriculture
 - d. Construction

[Answer in Fig 4.4. at <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms598669.pdf> ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017]

The correct answer is c: agriculture remains the main employer of youth in Africa. According to 2020 data from ILO, youth and young adults constitute approximately 50 per cent of the agricultural workforce of African countries, with young women accounting for over half of this group of workers.

(Sectors like Trade, hotels and restaurants, so services, Manufacturing and Construction follows.)

It is important to keep in mind that agriculture is and will remain the single largest source of employment and income for youth in SSA, at least for the next decade (Yeboah & Jayne 2016, 9). It is therefore important to pay attention to the adequate skills development in this sector. This will be addressed by the last paper in our second panel, so please stay with us until the end.

Thank you very much for your active participation in the quiz. As expected, there is already a great amount of expertise in this virtual room. The information for today’s quiz were taken from the evidence synthesis papers that INCLUDE has commissioned in the frame of our joint research initiative, called “Boosting Decent Employment for Africa’s Youth” – our collaborative efforts with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada and the International Labour Organization (ILO), under the umbrella of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. For those hungry of knowledge, I invite you to visit INCLUDE’s website to access the thematic evidence synthesis papers that are available there open-access. I am also happy to announce that in coming February, we will be releasing 5 more evidence synthesis papers addressing topics pertinent to youth employment challenge (see the slide), so stay tuned.

1. Digital skills and literacy in light of the future of work
2. Youth employment in the rural economy
3. Green jobs for youth
4. Governments’ actions for youth employment

5. The impact of different types of crises on youth employment outcomes.

And before I give back the floor to Ivonne who will kick start the panels, I reserved the very last question to you to check your level of energy.

1. How do you feel this morning?
 - a. I am fine, thank you. Just a regular day.
 - b. I am very well. I really look forward to the presentations.
 - c. I am a bit tired but curious to learn more from the speakers.
 - d. I am here as I have to. I am so fed up with virtual conferences.

Excellent! I think that there is enough energy in the room to continue. And for those who are tired, we hope that our speakers will be able to engage you and share some of their energy with you. Thank you very much for your attention and participation and Ivonne – I give the floor back to you.

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All evidence synthesis papers prepared in the frame of the joint initiative between INCLUDE, IDRC and ILO, under the umbrella of Decent Jobs for Youth are available on <https://includeplatform.net/knowledge-base-category/evidence-synthesis/>