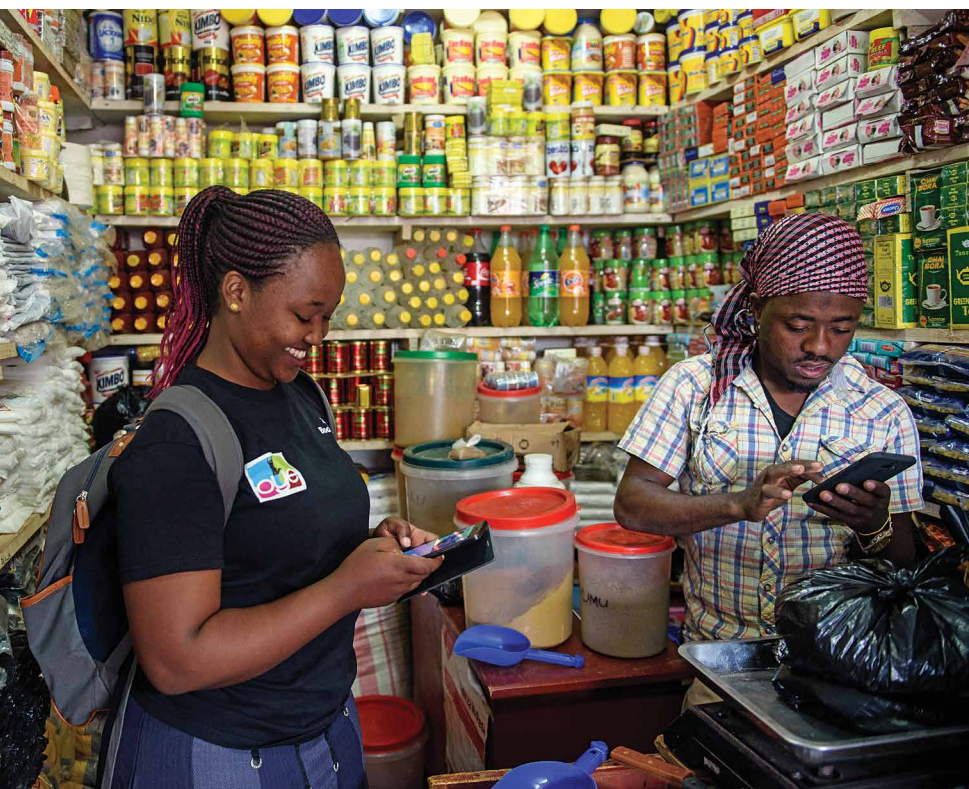

What Works in Soft Skills Development for Youth Employment?

A DONORS' PERSPECTIVE



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A wide range of stakeholders and YEFG members, including experts from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Citi Foundation, the Department for International Development, JPMorgan Chase, and the World Bank, were consulted during the development of the report. Draft versions of the report were discussed through Youth Employment Funders Group webinars and at various events, including at the Brookings Institution in conjunction with the Center for Universal Education’s Annual Research and Policy Symposium, the Building Evidence in Education (BE2) 2017 annual meeting and the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 2017 conference.

YEFG Steering Committee



Executive Summary

Profound global changes in the use of technology and the nature of work have urgent implications for how we educate young people and prepare them for the labour market. Employers are increasingly looking for youth who are flexible, adaptable, proactive, creative and collaborative. In short, youth need soft skills: the broad set of skills, attitudes, behaviours and personal qualities that enable them to effectively navigate their environment, work with others, perform well and achieve their goals.

There is a growing awareness of the value of soft skills to both employee productivity and the healthy development of young people in general. The development of soft skills is deeply intertwined with academic and technical skill development. Though soft skills are increasingly seen to benefit youth in all domains of life, these skills are poorly understood, not well assessed, and too often overlooked in policy and institutional contexts, including education, training and the workplace.

This report summarizes areas of consensus regarding soft skills from the perspective of the Youth Employment Funders Group (YEFG), a network of donors working together to generate and share more and better evidence-based knowledge on what works in the field of youth employment. The document provides a common understanding for policymakers, employers, donors, and civil society organizations, identifies implementation and evaluation challenges, and suggests directions for investment in cost-effective, scalable and sustainable interventions and knowledge.



A young worker checks final products at a garment factory in Hung Yen Province. ILO in Asia and the Pacific. ©ILO/Nguyễn Việt Thanh

Summary of Recommendations

1. Build Coherence Around Soft Skills

- Focus on core skills while taking a holistic view.
- Harmonize terminology.

2. Deepen Reform Efforts

- Support mindset change across the system.
- Foster soft skills systems within governments.
- Expand soft skills in formal education.
- Support youth in active learning and leadership roles.

3. Catalyze Essential Partnerships

- Create education and training partnerships with businesses.
- Scale demand-driven models.
- Develop linkages between civil society organizations and formal education institutions.

4. Improve Program Quality

- Ensure learning environments are structured to build soft skills.
- Support the preparation of teachers and youth workers.
- Foster entrepreneurial thinking.

5. Enhance Assessment and Evaluation

- Build better, more consistent soft skills assessment measures.
- Evaluate for effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, in order to scale.
- Pay equal attention to institutional culture and practices.

Introduction

The **Sustainable Development Goals** are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Sustainable Development **Goal 8** aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.” The targets establish that “for all” includes young people, as well as both women and men, and persons with disabilities.

The targets also include a reduction in the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training, and the operationalization of a global strategy for youth employment. They also speak to “promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services,” all of which will also support youth employment.

Additionally, **Goal 4** on education also has specific and explicit relevance to youth employment. Here, targets include a focus on access to affordable and quality technical and vocational education, and on increasing the number of youth with relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

The **Youth Employment Funders Group (YFEG)** is a network of over twenty multilateral organizations and international donors, including private foundations, working together to generate and share more and better evidence-based knowledge on what works in the field of youth employment. YFEG has been meeting since 2009, with a secretariat established in 2014 to support the Group’s mission.

The severity of global youth unemployment and working poverty has rallied the international community and drawn attention to the need for high-quality, relevant youth skills development, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals. Globally, over 70 million youth are unemployed, and 156 million young workers are living in poverty.² For young people to successfully contribute to the growth of emerging economies, their skills need to be adaptable to both the changing nature of work and the various opportunities that become available to them. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is contingent on the ability of young people to effectively and successfully transition into the workforce and retain employment over time. Their ability to master soft skills is key to being able to successfully navigate the various pathways of work.

There is a growing awareness that, combined with technical and academic achievement, soft skills are critical to young people’s success in the workplace and their development in all domains of life. But soft skills are poorly understood, not well assessed, and all too often overlooked in policy and institutional contexts, including education, training and the workplace. By highlighting the importance of soft skills and seeking to more deeply understand them, we can help ensure that all young people acquire these skills for employment and life success. Despite a proliferation of terms and frameworks for describing these skills, there is a remarkable consensus around the types of skills youth need and the broad parameters regarding how to develop them. While much is still to be learned about which interventions work best for youth populations in specific country contexts, a great deal is known about soft skills development principles, from fields as diverse as psychology, economics, business, education and health.

The Youth Employment Funders Group believes that the emerging evidence for soft skills acquisition justifies increased policy dialogue, investment, coherence and scaled programmatic implementation. This report summarizes the areas of consensus on soft skills for policymakers, employers, educators, donors and civil society organizations. The report also identifies implementation and evaluation challenges, as well as promising avenues for investment in cost-effective, scalable and sustainable interventions and in new knowledge to support these interventions.

How are soft skills defined?

For the purpose of this report, soft skills are defined as the mix of skills, attitudes, behaviours, personal qualities and mindsets that individuals use to be successful across different situations in work and life. While recognizing that all terms come with strengths and challenges, YEFG prefers the term “soft skills,” especially when referring to workforce development and youth employment outcomes.

Recent analysis leads us to propose that youth soft skills development should focus on five sets of skills: **positive self-concept, self-control, communication, social skills and higher-order thinking** (which includes problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making).³ A focus on these skills for youth employment programming does not mean that they are the only soft skills that matter for all young people everywhere, nor that programs should cease conducting assessments to determine the needs of particular target groups. Rather, a focus on these core skills ensures that all youth build the soft skills for which there is evidence of positive employment outcomes, and that there is greater coherence in the field.

See Annex 2 for further discussion on terminology.

Why is it important to pay attention to soft skills for youth?

TODAY’S (AND TOMORROW’S) GLOBAL ECONOMY NEEDS SOFT SKILLS MORE THAN EVER

Since the early 1990s, when the report *What Work Requires of Schools* was issued to the US Department of Labor by the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills,⁴ the skills gap has been an enduring focus of analysis. The skills gap refers to the degree of alignment or misalignment between the skills youth develop through education and training, and the skills needed by employers. As real as this misalignment is, there is also a gap between skills needed today and those needed in the future, because the exact nature or rate of change of economic progress cannot be predicted. As a result, educational institutions’ offerings tend to lag behind the real economy.

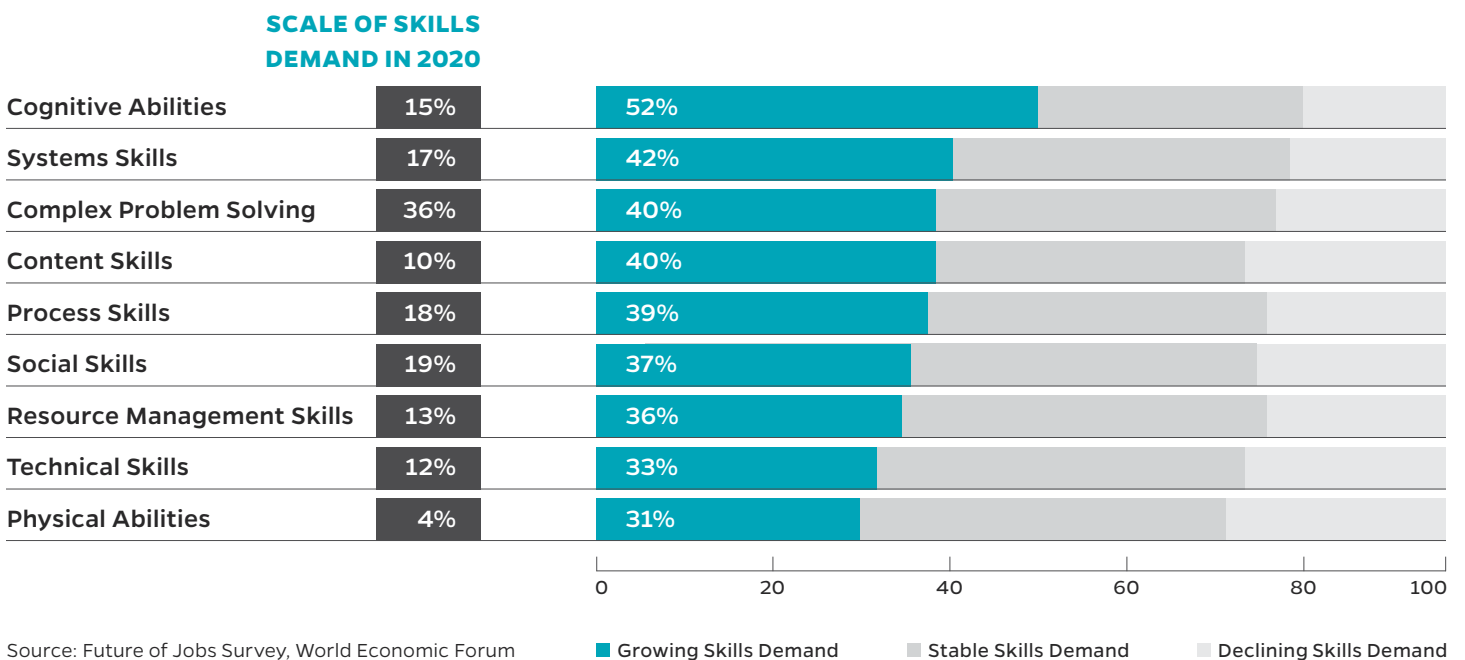
“Already today, some 40 percent of employers globally are finding it difficult to recruit people with the skills they need. The ability to acquire new skills throughout life, to adapt and to work flexibly will be at a premium, as will technical, social, and critical thinking skills.”

— The Education Commission,
The Learning Generation (2016).

Profound global changes in the use of technology and the nature of work have urgent implications for how young people prepare for the labour market. Youth increasingly need to be flexible, adaptable, proactive, creative and collaborative. In short, they need soft skills to effectively navigate their environment, work with others, perform well and achieve their goals. And, in recognition of the changing nature of work and the workplace, employers increasingly demand soft skills to support their enterprises and organizations. Where soft skills lead to better business performance, this can translate into economic growth.

According to a recent World Economic Forum study, described in **Figure 1**, “more than one third (36%) of all jobs across all industries are expected ... to require complex problem-solving as one of their core skills, compared to less than 1 in 20 jobs (4%) that will have a core requirement for physical abilities such as physical strength or dexterity.”⁵ Furthermore, “... social skills — such as persuasion, emotional intelligence and teaching others — will be in higher demand across industries than narrow technical skills, such as programming or equipment operation and control. Content skills (which include ICT literacy and active learning), cognitive abilities (such as creativity and mathematical reasoning) and process skills (such as active listening and critical thinking) will be a growing part of the core skills requirements for many industries.”⁶ Non-routine work tasks are increasing in proportion to routine work, requiring flexibility in thinking and behaviour. Similarly, in the United States, between 1980 and 2012, the number of jobs requiring social skills grew by nearly 10 percent, while the number of math-intensive but less social jobs (including many STEM occupations) shrank by about three percent.⁷

Figure 1: Need for soft skills large and growing across industries.⁸ Change in demand for core work-related skills, 2015-2020, all industries. Share of jobs requiring skills family as part of their core skills set, %.

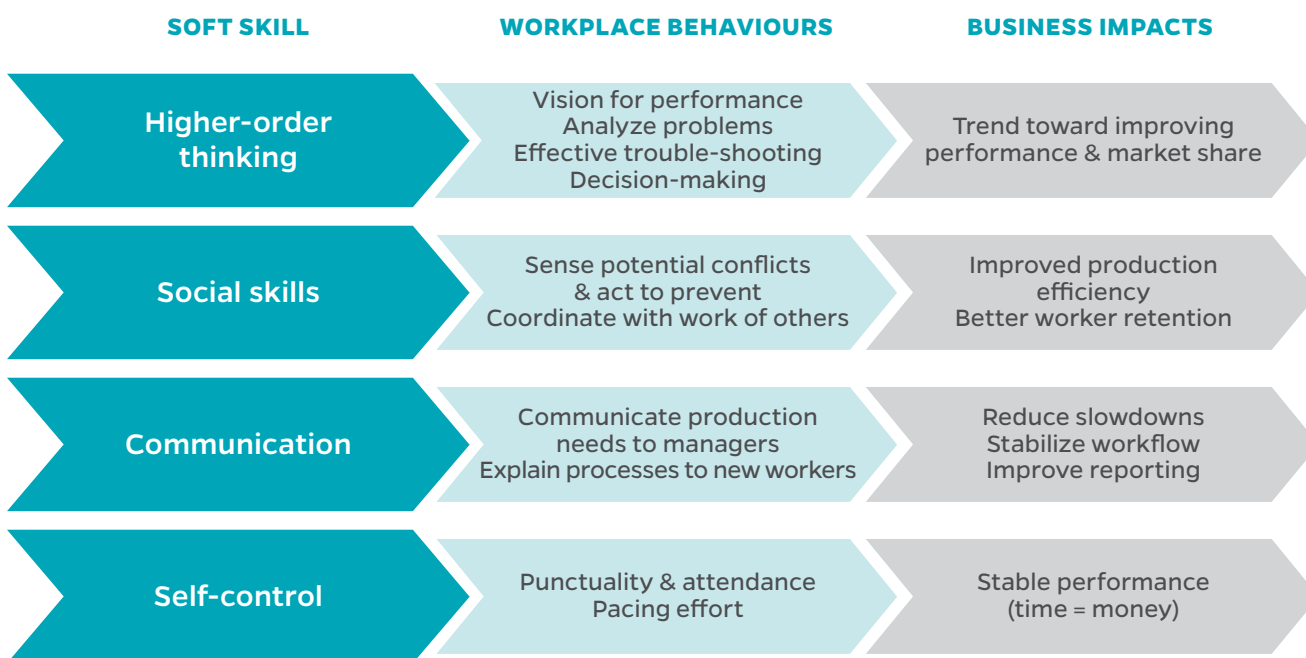


We do know, however, that there is exponential growth in data-production-related work and some technology-related work (e.g., 3D printing, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence) that will likely mean that labour markets will experience disruptive change in how work is performed, as well as the skills needed for success within it.

Overall, the trend is toward increased need for complex problem-solving and social skills.⁹ A recent World Bank analysis of 27 studies globally reveals that while employers value all skill sets — basic cognitive, technical, advanced cognitive, and socio-emotional — they especially value the latter two skill sets by wide margins. The study notes that “these results are robust across region, industry, occupation, and education level. Employers perceive that the greatest gaps are in socio-emotional and higher-order cognitive skills.”¹⁰ Overall, there is a growing recognition among employers and educators that left-brain dominance such as technical know-how must be complemented, and is in fact deeply interwoven, with right-brain intelligence such as empathy, inventiveness, creativity, intrinsic motivation and growth mindset.¹¹

For employers, building a consistent and measurable business case for investment in soft skills development is crucial. Having a workforce of employees who have mastered key soft skills reduces employer costs in recruitment, training time and employee turnover, and improves employee performance on bottom-line business metrics, such as higher sales and better consumer service. An example from manufacturing is provided below in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: The link between soft skills, workplace behaviours and outcomes for the manufacturing sector.



Source: Adapted from USAID (July 2016).¹²

There are now greater opportunities for youth employment service providers and employers to work together to collect and analyze such business data and to use it for program development. Businesses may also agree to enter cost-share agreements or be willing to pay for services that reliably produce marked skills improvements in youth, especially for entry-level jobs. More robust private-sector investment could alleviate some of the resource limitations that have prevented scaling of youth employment efforts to date.

Although the global economy is increasingly undergoing disruptive technological change, the reality of work remains quite different for a majority of low-income youth across the developing world. In low- and middle-income countries, at least three out of four young workers are informally employed.¹³ In the absence of sufficient waged employment opportunities, the vast majority of young people “undertake a mix of informal sector employment, self-employment and agriculture-related activities”¹⁴ in order to reduce risk and diversify opportunity. Livelihoods are mixed concurrently and in succession, in the short term and over the course of a working life. Many young people also combine one or more jobs and income-generating activities with investments of time and resources in education or training in order to build knowledge and skills to grow their business or change their career. Soft skills can be useful for negotiating these multiple, sometimes unpredictable, livelihood options.¹⁵

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT SCIENCE TELLS US THAT YOUTH IS A CRITICAL PERIOD FOR SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Policy interest in soft skills has also been influenced by increasing scientific understanding of youth development processes, including the development of the brain. Recent neuroscientific research has overturned older beliefs that brain development was complete and set by early childhood.¹⁶ In fact, the brain changes and exhibits the ability to regenerate throughout life. The brain is malleable until at least the mid-to-late twenties, and key personality traits, such as conscientiousness, can shift in older age.¹⁷ In addition to early childhood, adolescence and young adulthood together make up the second critical window of opportunity for growth and development. There is mounting evidence of this, including:

- Positive developmental experiences in early and middle childhood are critical to optimal soft skills development in adolescence and young adulthood.
- Soft skills can be learned. Even personality traits, which are usually thought to be stable, shift throughout life and are mediated by skills.¹⁸ For example, an introverted person can develop, and deploy at will, the skills and behaviours that are usually associated with more extroverted people.¹⁹



Printing house worker in Cambodia, ILO in Asia and the Pacific.
©ILO/Wei Xiangnan.

- A complex combination of genetics and experience shapes the brain on a continuous basis. Experience and lived reality at all levels — physical, social, emotional and cognitive — are what trim neural circuits for more efficient thought.
- During adolescence, the brain is still a work in progress. Adolescents and young adults are in the process of developing executive function, which includes selective attention, long-term planning, prioritizing, calibrating risk and reward, and regulation of emotion.
- Adolescents and young adults tend to be highly sensitive to, and motivated by, rewards in their social environment because of dynamic changes in brain structure during this period. They often exhibit more risk-taking behaviours as executive function is not fully developed.²⁰
- Young people who have experienced stress and trauma through exposure to extreme poverty, deprivation, violence and conflict earlier in life may experience greater challenges in developing executive functioning and self-regulation, i.e., managing emotions and impulses. However, these challenges can be overcome with positive developmental experiences.²¹
- In addition to the development of higher-order thinking, identity formation is the major developmental task for young adults. This includes becoming aware of their strengths and preferences and making decisions about their educational pathways and employment prospects.

Together, these insights make a strong case for the value of investing in positive developmental experiences for youth.

Furthermore, youth program operators can judiciously apply neuroscience findings to program practice. Many young people experience high levels of stress and trauma. This exposure to adversity may compromise brain function in terms of self-control and executive functioning, making it more difficult for young people to develop the soft skills needed for workforce success. Practitioners working with trauma-affected youth can consider interventions such as cognitive-behavioural therapy to build self-control and positive self-concept. Additionally, brain research shows that adolescents are motivated differently from both children and adults, a finding that can be applied to program activities to help youth participants master new skills and collaborate well.²²

Although researchers have used a conceptual distinction between “cognitive” and “non-cognitive” factors, this distinction has little functional meaning from the point of view of learning and development. The foundational components of learning and development — self-regulation, knowledge and skills, mindsets, and values — are mutually reinforcing and interconnected.²³ This suggests that to be successful, youth employment programs must take an integrated approach to helping youth develop all dimensions of competence — socio-emotional, cognitive and behavioural — and these programs should understand the progressive nature of skills development throughout life.

SOFT SKILLS CONTRIBUTE TO BROADER DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

BRAC’s Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) program in Uganda is an example of a program that focuses on soft skills delivery for young women. The program delivered livelihoods and life skills that included soft skills such as leadership, conflict management and negotiation, through adolescent development clubs. Comprised of 20–35 girls, the clubs met at a community site and were facilitated by a trained female mentor. An impact evaluation found that after two years, girls’ income-generating activity rose by 72 percent, personal consumption rose by 38 percent and teen pregnancy fell by 26 percent.

Source: Bandiera, O., et al. (2015).

A growing body of evidence²⁴ suggests that soft skills are linked to a broad array of social and health behaviours and can result in a wider range of positive outcomes, including conflict and violence prevention, active and responsible citizenship, and improved sexual and reproductive health. These are important in themselves, and can positively affect employment outcomes. For example, programs fostering soft skills linked to both reproductive health decision-making and livelihoods, such as positive self-concept, self-efficacy and goal-orientation, have been shown to produce strong positive outcomes in young women. These skills help girls in particular navigate the complex decision-making involved in balancing work, education and family formation in adolescence and young adulthood.²⁵ When educational institutions “provide the opportunities for students to develop relationships, learn how to express their ideas and use their negotiation skills, it can transfer over into the household sphere leading to potentially positive influence on household gender relations.”²⁶

A USAID review notes that “youth programs increase tolerance and reduce participation in violent activities, especially when they include conflict mediation, peacebuilding, and psycho-social training or support.”²⁷ A WHO report asserts that “interventions for developing life skills can help young people to avoid violence, by improving their social and emotional competencies, teaching them how to deal effectively and non-violently with conflict and helping them to find employment.”²⁸ Well-implemented mentoring programs have shown strong effects: Big Brothers Big Sisters of America was found to decrease drug and alcohol use (by 46 percent and 27 percent), school truancy (by 37 percent) and aggression (by 33 percent).²⁹

Soft skills development can support youth who have experienced trauma or stress, including through displacement. For example, reflecting on their work with adolescent refugees, Mercy Corps notes that “... promoting transferable skills such as communication, leadership and time management is an effective way to keep young people positively

engaged while also strengthening their ability to later transition to employment or self-employment. ... [This can] help them navigate their current environment, as well as combat the feelings of isolation many are experiencing. We're focused on providing this non-formal learning so that adolescents can understand their current stresses, make good decisions and also be appropriately equipped to enter the workforce when the time is right."³⁰

Through helping youth make informed choices, reducing sexual and reproductive health risks, finding a job or starting a business in a new location, and managing and remitting money, it is anticipated that soft skills can also help youth manage other forms of migration in a way that is safer, more sustainable and more productive. These skills help to reduce the “push” factor in youth migration while also reducing the skills gap faced by businesses, thus supporting local economic growth and opportunity.

Guiding principles for soft skills investments

The guiding principles for fostering youth soft skills development are well understood.³¹ There is a great deal of qualitative, theoretical and anecdotal evidence that soft skills programs affect youth aspirations, self-concept and behaviours, which translate into better education, health and employment impacts. However, there are few rigorous evaluations that directly demonstrate soft skills gains in youth, especially in shorter-term programs. Youth development experts (researchers and program implementers alike) often have clear and practical knowledge of how to foster soft skills in youth that is reflected in the many available implementation guides.³² Sometimes experienced youth workers know through practice how to build youth soft skills, even if they do not use technical language to describe these processes.³³

DEEPENING AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND COMMITMENT TO SOFT SKILLS ACROSS ALL STAKEHOLDERS CAN TRIGGER A VIRTUOUS CYCLE

Given the growing changes in the labour market, all stakeholders concerned with youth employment — schools, employers, communities and families — will need to significantly scale up the opportunities and support available to youth to develop critical soft skills. This means becoming more intentional about changing mindsets, relationships and practices of all these core stakeholders, and working across youth learning and employment systems to involve diverse partners in the private and public sectors as well as families and community-based organizations.

Figure 3: The soft skills ecosystem



Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator in South Africa attributes its youth job placement success in part to its use of a tool it calls Shadowmatch. The tool matches youth (based on qualifications and behavioural habits) to a task within a context (i.e., working conditions). With Shadowmatch, Harambee examines youth's habits, including their propensities to simplify, adapt and handle frustration, as well as their resilience, responsiveness, self-motivation, self-confidence and attitude. This careful attention to matching the right youth to the right job dramatically reduces the cost of turnover and re-training. The private sector routinely uses similar kinds of screenings for new hires, but few youth employment programs do so.

The diagram suggests the dynamic, interactive and iterative nature of these processes. As awareness and understanding grows about the importance of soft skills among stakeholders, deeper commitment to the development of soft skills through a range of institutions emerges, and collaborative relationships are designed and implemented. This in turn further refines awareness, understanding and commitment. As teaching, learning and employment practices adjust to reflect new relationships, better results are generated for youth.

SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IS MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN APPLIED AND DEMAND-DRIVEN

Soft skills cannot be learned from a book. They are applied skills that require experiential, active learning opportunities. Soft skills development requires exposing youth to new ideas and behaviours, and learning them requires appropriate levels of challenge, practice, feedback and reflection. Instructors who provide support, coaching and encouragement to youth are critical as youth learn and demonstrate the skills.

For soft skills to be useful to both youth and employers, they need to be tailored to and practised within actual workforce conditions and market demands. Demand-driven youth training models require careful collaboration with employers to design training and placement opportunities for specific skills. The ILO highlights the important role of social partners³⁴ in contributing to the design, implementation and monitoring of education, training and lifelong learning policies and programs with a view to improving their responsiveness to the world of work. Out-of-school youth employment programs differ in their approaches. Some link demand-aware or demand-aligned³⁵ classroom-based soft skills workshops with technical training and experiential work-based learning opportunities. A newer generation of demand-driven, boot camp programs conduct screening and job matching before putting youth through a short, intensive soft-skills training focused on improving overall work performance. Both approaches are needed to meet the diversity of youth needs and readiness for the labour market, and there is some indication that the two approaches are increasingly intertwined.

Work-based learning occurs in both simulated and real work environments through partnerships with businesses, allowing for job shadowing, industry visits, internships and mentorships. Community service projects and entrepreneurship, often conducted in teams, foster collaboration and social skills, strategic planning, and self-evaluation in youth. Many workforce development programs offer employment and entrepreneurship tracks with slight, but significant, variation in the emphasis on the types of soft skills developed. For example, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator in South Africa notes that young entrepreneurs need to develop the ability to manage themselves, their time and their business relationships in the community, while youth entering jobs need to master punctuality, teamwork and workplace ethics.

Entrepreneurship skills-building programs have been shown to successfully encourage entrepreneurial thinking and behaviour and develop socio-emotional skills. It is not assumed that all students, or even a majority, would create their own businesses in the near term, but rather that entrepreneurship provides a rich experiential learning situation in which they acquire the self-awareness, creativity, persistence, strategic planning and problem-solving skills desired by employers.

There is increasing interest in developing new methods to signal youth's soft skill attainment to employers. Digital badging systems, for example, are intended to improve the efficiency of job-matching systems.³⁶ This and other new approaches would ideally complement both credentialing by youth employment programs, and the power of employers' appreciation of the superior performance of well-prepared youth in the workplace, in signalling youth soft skills attainment.

Instead of asking employers to list the skills they need in new hires, **McKinsey Social Initiative's Generation** (in Kenya, India, Mexico, the United States and Spain) observes high performers in the workplace, analyzes "break-down moments" and then intensively trains youth in these critical work sequences. Mindsets and behaviours, such as teamwork, customer focus, proactiveness, communication, personal responsibility, growth mindset and persistence, are fully integrated with technical skills, such as inventory management and client acquisition.

INTEGRATING SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT WITHIN FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS ENHANCES QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

A recent study of education systems in the developing world shows that governments are generally aware of the need to teach a greater breadth of skills, but have yet to implement this vision across all levels of the education system.³⁷ Most ministries of education in developing countries know that they need to reinvent their schools to reflect learning needs and strive to meet the challenges of inadequate educational access for disadvantaged populations and school dropouts. While not the only solution, youth soft skills development can be a lever for addressing these multiple challenges. Reforms that build youth soft skills also enhance the overall quality and relevance of academic preparation and increase student and family engagement in learning.

In Rwanda, the **Education Development Center's Akazi Kanoze** program introduced the *Rwandan Youth Work Readiness Curriculum*, which consists of a series of workforce skills training modules. It aims to strengthen vocational training to include transferable and life skills, such as savings groups, financial literacy skills, entrepreneurship training and professional development. Program participants receive about 100 hours of work-readiness training followed by another 35 hours of entrepreneurship training. Importantly, Akazi Kanoze also links the curriculum to internships, apprenticeships and entrepreneurship opportunities where participants gain experience in trades related to market demand. The results of the program's randomized controlled trial suggest that Akazi Kanoze has been beneficial in strengthening employment outcomes and work readiness. Participants in rural areas were 12% more likely to be employed compared with those who did not participate in the program. Participants also achieved gains in work readiness, skills development and financial management.

Source: Winthrop, R., et al (2016).

Policymakers are progressively interested in scaling up learning outcomes across the entire youth cohort within countries, and the factors and dynamics that enable their learning and gainful employment. Inevitably, this requires modernizing or reforming formal education systems. For developing countries, the question of soft skills acquisition is layered onto the persistent challenge of providing education and training to rural and underserved young people, and to stemming school drop-out. However, these challenges are not necessarily at odds. Developing more engaging, relevant learning opportunities — prerequisites to soft skills development — also have the effect of keeping youth and their families engaged in education longer and ensuring that educational investment bears fruit in better employment prospects for youth.

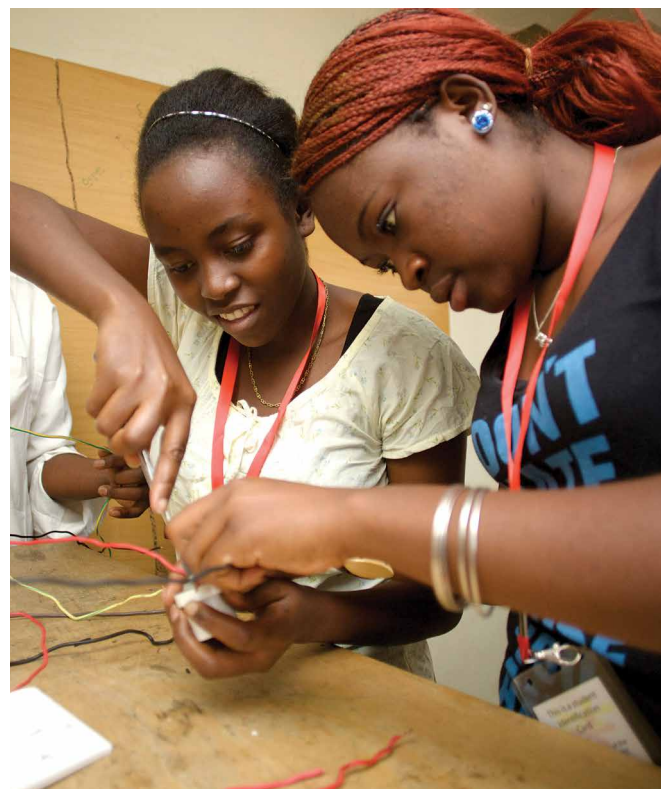
The challenges that formal education systems in developing countries have in relation to youth soft skills acquisition are well known. Teachers are often hamstrung by rigid, high-stakes testing regimes, large class sizes and outdated curricula that focus on knowledge retention instead of real-world competencies. An understanding of adolescent development is not generally manifested in the curriculum or institutional culture (i.e., the quality and character of school life or program setting). Additionally, there are few extracurricular opportunities for youth skills development. Furthermore, professional development and school management systems may not support teachers in developing their own soft skills or in learning how to best foster them in students while simultaneously teaching academic and technical skills. These challenges hold true for technical and vocational training but may be mitigated where internships and work-based learning opportunities for students are offered.

There has been little, if any, impact evaluation of soft skills interventions in formal education systems in developing countries. However, intensive work on accountability around school culture, student and teacher engagement, and social-emotional learning in the USA and Canada may point to the future for developing country efforts.³⁸

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS HAVE PILOTED INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE MODELS

A consistent trend in scaling soft skills learning in formal education systems has been the borrowing, adaptation and uptake of effective models from successful, innovative NGO programs operating in out-of-school time or for out-of-school youth. NGO and community-based organizations often function as incubators for innovative youth development approaches that foster soft skills by using the arts, technology, media, sports and entrepreneurship. Where shared standards and practitioner guides have been developed to build best practices, the quality of out-of-school programming has improved.

Formal education systems can tap into these program models and curricula in their own reform processes. Examples include INJAZ, Educate! and Aflatoun, all of which brought youth entrepreneurship and financial education — along with related soft skills — into the school curriculum or extra-curricular offerings. Scaling was achieved through social franchise models,³⁹ by controlling costs from the start⁴⁰ and by engaging the private sector.⁴¹ Motivated by reform movements, the Ministry of Education in Rwanda and the TVET Authority in Kenya examined work-readiness models originally developed for out-of-school youth — Akazi Kanoze and CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (YEI), respectively — for adaptation and scale-up in their formal education systems. In Rwanda, the work-readiness curriculum is infused into the entrepreneurship program required for all senior secondary students. In Kenya, components of CAP YEI's Basic Employability Skills Training model are being incorporated into vocational training centres. In these cases, curricula are being adapted from shorter-term, intensive youth programs to multi-year academic programs, and teachers receive in-service training in active learning pedagogies through a cascading training model.⁴² In the case of Rwanda, a new organization, Akazi Kanoze Access, was created to build capacity among teachers and administrators.



These young women are being trained in electrical installation with CAP Youth Empowerment Institute in Kenya. Intersect for Mastercard Foundation.

Soft skills programs are usually not stand-alone but instead are integrated with other kinds of learning and supports tailored to youth. In the context of formal education, the acquisition of academic skills (reading, writing, math and other subject areas) and technical-vocational skills (such as electrical engineering) should also enable the development of soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and teamwork. To achieve strong employment outcomes for out-of-school youth, soft skills development needs to be linked to other kinds of program supports such as financial literacy, ICT training, job placement services, internships and career guidance. Successful programs for both in- and out-of-school youth typically use engaging modalities for fostering soft skills, such as sports, arts and theatre, entrepreneurship, competitive games and multi-media.

Galpão Aplauso, implemented by the Instituto Stimulus Brasil, is a youth training program for at-risk youth (17–29 years old) in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. It uses dance and theatre performance activities to teach crucial soft skills such as cooperation, trustworthiness and leadership. Engagement with local private-sector partners is a central aspect of the project as they sponsor training modules, provide financing and, more importantly, hire many of the program's graduates. A recent impact evaluation found large, statistically significant short- and medium-term effects on both employment and earnings. Five months after program completion, participating youth saw a 19 percent increase over the control group in the likelihood of having a job, and nearly twice the increases in earnings over the control group (\$130 versus \$70 monthly).

Source: Calero, C., et al (2014).⁴³

Programs for out-of-school youth delivered by the NGO sector have greater flexibility to design and continually adapt programming for youth based on evolving market needs. However, financial sustainability and, by extension, scaling of these program models remains challenging — especially where out-of-school, unemployed youth populations are large. It can also be difficult to maintain quality since cross-program coordination and professional development systems for out-of-school programming are less developed than in formal education.

Nonetheless, there are promising new approaches. One is the movement toward more demand-driven programming, with lighter but smarter-touch training using ICT and better and more real-time data. In these cases, programs are structured to quickly demonstrate to businesses the value of hiring program-vetted youth, and to expect a cost sharing with the employer and a commitment to the hiring and work-based learning of trained youth. The recruitment and training of youth is highly targeted, rapid and performance-based, using scorecards for feedback. Soft skills development is seamlessly integrated into developing the young person as a successful employee, able to mobilize and utilize skills and technical knowledge in a flexible manner.

A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT – AT SCHOOL, AT HOME AND IN THE COMMUNITY – IS IMPORTANT

A supportive learning environment must include physical and emotional safety for youth — both among peers, and between youth and instructors. Research has shown that the single most important factor for positive youth development is a meaningful, supportive relationship for each youth with at least one adult.⁴⁴ However, to enable deep learning experiences for youth, adults need to embody and model these skills, as well as to understand the range of skills youth should develop and how to impart them. At the systems level, truly transformative, durable changes in youth skills require consistency across multiple domains of young people's lives, connecting and harmonizing their experiences at home, school and work.

To develop soft skills, youth need space for autonomous decision-making, creativity and self-advocacy. Sometimes the development of soft skills can come into conflict with traditional norms in patriarchal, autocratic and age-stratified societies. More conservative societies may erect barriers including, for example, against young women expressing self-assertiveness and goal-orientation, young men discussing emotional issues openly, or any youth speaking openly in the presence of elders. Social change processes successfully utilized in the adolescent sexual and reproductive health field may be applicable here, including public dialogue coupled with media coverage, community-driven collective action, and staff reflection on their own attitudes and behaviours vis-à-vis normative change.⁴⁵

ACTIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAMMING CAN FOSTER SOFT SKILLS

Meaningful youth engagement is critical for effective program and policy planning; it can also help youth build soft skills.⁴⁶ Millennials and post-millennials differ from earlier generations in terms of their approaches to and preferences for learning and social interaction. “They are connected, mobile, social, instantaneous and entertainment-oriented ... for them, knowledge is open, collaborative, accessible, often from the bottom up.”⁴⁷ Labour market shifts and the expansion of democracy in the developing world⁴⁸ mean that young people demand participation, choice and voice, and seek to develop skills related to those values and desires. They often learn best from their peers.

Community service, peer-mentoring, service-learning and youth-led development are very promising ways of building soft skills in young adults; however, they have not yet been adequately evaluated and are underutilized in the developing world. Every young person should have multiple opportunities to assess, design and deliver needed services to their own community and beyond. The resulting work experience and skills they foster are in high demand in the labour market. Youth-led design has the effect of building soft skills and therefore should be scaled up, especially in community-based programs. More research is required on the effects of youth-led approaches in comparison to more conventional programming designed and led by adults.

INVESTMENT IN MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION OF SOFT SKILLS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IS VALUABLE

Despite wide support for soft skills development among employers, educators and families, the evidence base is uneven. Although a growing monitoring and evaluation culture is beginning to more clearly demonstrate returns on investment, a lack of rigorous and nuanced research and evaluation on soft skills formation, and interventions to foster them, is constraining the field.

At the programmatic level, there are very few rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations of youth employment programs in developing countries that include a soft skills component. Out of a total of 87 programs included in a recent International Labour Organization systematic review,⁵¹ 36 youth employment programs that include a soft skills intervention were analyzed. Of these, only six are conducted in low-income countries and another dozen in middle-income countries.⁵²

The evidence across all countries shows that comprehensive or multi-component youth employment programs that include soft skills development appear to be more effective than those that do not. Due to the structure of the evaluations, however, it cannot be shown that success is uniquely attributable to the soft skills intervention. Programs that include social skills interventions are more effective in low-income countries (in contrast to middle- and high-income) and among female participants, results consistent with other meta-analyses of skills training programs. This analysis also shows greater effects for employment versus income outcomes, at least in the short-term time frame of the study.

Most of the youth employment programs that foster soft skills do so through a combination of interventions including workshop or classroom sessions, mentoring, and experiential learning through micro-entrepreneurship, community service and/or internships. This set of evaluations reveals a very wide range of treatment intensity: between 43 and 400 hours, with a median of 76 hours. Few evaluations describe the length of training (only 11 of 38 interventions). Without better information about the intensity of training, it is difficult for the field to determine which kinds of intervention are cost-effective.

Evidence of effectiveness of soft skills interventions remains somewhat lacking for two main reasons: because measurement tools are weak, and because the holistic nature of skills formation makes it difficult to separate out program effects on the development of specific skills. Evaluations more typically measure results indirectly by examining effects on higher-order outcomes such as educational achievement and employment.

There is a complex relationship between soft skills and youth employment outcomes at both programmatic and macro levels. At the macro level, there is strong evidence from longitudinal studies in high-income countries of the link between soft skills and workforce success.⁴⁹ There is also mounting evidence that youth with more developed soft skills have improved outcomes in many life domains: they stay longer in school, perform better academically, are less likely to participate in violence, and have higher incomes.⁵⁰ However, there are gaps for the same evidence in developing countries, as described in the box.

Because of a lack of conceptual precision and consistency in terms, assessment of progress in youth soft skills growth remains difficult. Most soft skills assessments have been self-report surveys which, unfortunately, are not reliable due to social desirability and reference biases.⁵³ Furthermore, because response scales are less studied, these tools generally have not been sensitive enough to show growth in youth skill development, especially for programs of shorter duration (typical of workforce development programs) and for youth at the higher range of ability levels (the ceiling effect).⁵⁴ On the other hand, self-report surveys are easy to use and can be developed for a wide range of skills including contextual constructs (e.g., youth experiences in programs). They may be adequate for formative and programmatic uses, but are not recommended for high-stakes evaluation and cross-program comparison.⁵⁵ Newer assessment tools are currently being developed to confront some of these shortcomings. Examples include anchoring vignettes,⁵⁶ situational judgement tests, gaming and other performance-based measures, and through the triangulation of reporting sources, including administrative data such as school attendance and disciplinary records.

In addition to measuring individual youth skills, there is also growing interest in measuring the structures, practices and culture in schools and training programs that promote soft skills development in youth. By taking an environmental or systems approach, we can understand better how pedagogies, school or program culture, discipline and management practices, instructor preparedness, policies, and partnerships all contribute to creating an environment conducive to building soft skills. Assessment tools and frameworks are available for both formal education and non-formal youth programs. Efforts to systematically measure and track improvements in teacher preparedness to foster soft skills, school culture and responsive teaching practices are underway in OECD countries.⁵⁷

TO PLAN FOR SCALE, CONSIDER COST-EFFECTIVENESS

The extent of the youth employment challenge in developing countries requires that we design solutions capable of reaching many millions of young people. Planning for scale requires deep engagement from the outset with a range of public- and private-sector stakeholders who can mainstream successful approaches within institutions, organizations and systems.

Scaling up also requires a careful understanding of both the cost and effectiveness of different approaches. While the importance of soft skills development is not in question, further knowledge is needed about what works best for which populations in which labour market conditions, at what level of intensity, and at what cost. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs are needed to answer these questions, especially the intensity and duration of program interventions for effect thresholds, as this information is critical to costing and scaling programs in low-resource environments. Assessments are needed to better understand the cost-effectiveness of programs utilizing extensive workshops compared to those building soft skills entirely through applied settings, as well as the relative cost-effectiveness of online or blended learning models.

Effectiveness studies need to be complemented by implementation studies because a successful program in one location does not guarantee success in another context, under a different set of conditions. Comparative qualitative case studies are needed to delve into the complex processes and factors involved in successful scaling of youth soft skills learning in diverse country contexts and for both in-school and out-of-school contexts. Factors of analysis for studying scaling processes have been defined and should be used in more country-based and organizational case studies.⁵⁸



Phatt Veng an IT engineer at a hotel in Siem Reap, Cambodia. ©ILO/Wei Xiangnan. ILO in Asia and the Pacific.

Recommendations

The purpose of these recommendations is to stimulate increased attention to the quality and intensity of investments, build consensus, and catalyze greater strategic action around the most promising, sustainable approaches to soft skills development in youth at scale.

1. Build Coherence Around Soft Skills

Confusion in the youth education and training field about which soft skills are most important to develop and what to call them is a constraint to ensuring quality programming and building a strong evidence base. It is essential that core soft skills are prioritized and terminology is sharpened and harmonized.

- **Focus on core skills, while taking a holistic view.** Recent analysis provides a solid basis for focusing most soft skills development for youth employment on these five skills: **positive self-concept, self-control, communication, social skills and higher-order thinking** (including problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making).⁵⁹
- **Harmonize terminology.** To the degree possible, common language should be applied and youth programs developed to recognized frameworks.⁶⁰ This will enable researchers, policymakers and project designers to more easily compare programs.

2. Deepen Reform Efforts

To see larger-scale shifts in youth soft skills acquisition, education and training institutions must be reformed, practices changed, partnerships created and innovations scaled up, with business and communities also adjusting to realize larger-scale change.

- **Support mindset change across the system.** There is a need for mindset changes across institutions, policymakers and public perception. There is also a need for accountability measures. Institutional change will require vision-setting and multi-stakeholder partnerships to reach scale. Building soft skills for youth often requires cultural shifts in local norms and expectations (e.g., around youth agency and voice). In these cases, social change strategies are needed, such as public dialogue, vocal champions and social marketing.⁶¹
- **Foster soft skills systems within governments.** Governments at all levels should create enabling environments that bring employers together with education and training entities to significantly increase opportunities for youth soft skills development. Other elements of strong enabling environments include adequate investment,

incentives for reform, reduction of regulatory obstacles, sharing best practices across the system, and utilizing research and evaluation to guide policymaking and investments.

- **Expand soft skills in formal education.** Soft skills development should be expanded across the curriculum and school culture so that it is integrated with academic learning rather than neglected or treated as stand-alone. Reforms are needed, such as shifting the teacher role toward becoming a learning facilitator, infusing active learning across curriculum and pedagogy, and offering engaging after-school activities.
- **Support youth in active learning and leadership roles.** The work experience and skills young people gain from experiences in support of their communities are in high demand in the labour market. Youth-led design has the effect of building soft skills in youth and therefore should be scaled up especially in community-based programs.

3. Catalyze Essential Partnerships

Building youth soft skills for workforce success will require active, continuous dialogue and collaboration across governments, education and training providers, community-based youth programs, and employers. Such collaborative partnerships can expose both students and teachers to today's world of work and the kinds of skills needed for success, as well as enable all young people to learn experientially.

- **Create education and training partnerships with businesses** to support youth exposure to the world of work and experiential learning. As the development of soft skills is critical for business productivity, and development of these skills often happens on the job or in other applied contexts, employers should ensure that they are supporting this process in their recruitment, initial and in-service training, and job performance review processes. Mentoring, buddy systems and rapid feedback also help youth to quickly hone their skills.
- **Scale demand-driven models** to help ensure relevance and reduce resource constraints, as well as provide exposure to new skills and adaptability.
- **Develop linkages between civil society organizations and formal education institutions** to enable the development and adoption of new approaches and models to soft skills development. Rather than trying always to create new approaches from scratch, education systems should identify, adapt and test NGO-created models for scale-up into the formal system.

4. Improve Program Quality

To ensure programs effectively prepare youth with soft skills, reforms across multiple levels of service delivery, including curriculum, pedagogy, youth program design, school/program culture and teacher/instructor preparation, are needed.

- **Ensure learning environments are structured to build soft skills.** All youth programs should implement the foundational elements that research and practice have demonstrated as critical for youth soft skills development and learning.⁶² These include active learning opportunities in safe environments, meaningful relationships with adults and an appreciation for the breadth of soft skills and how to foster them.
- **Support the preparation of teachers and youth workers.** Educators (in both formal and informal institutions) need to have the opportunity to focus on soft skills development through the removal of barriers that prevent them from offering experiential learning.
- In TVET systems, this means allowing flexibility for and incentivizing on-the-job training, exposing youth to industry mentors, and allowing real work and production to occur on the training site.
- In formal education systems, this means reducing the complexity and rigidity of the curriculum and testing regime so that teachers have the space and time to incorporate active learning for soft skills.
- Adults working with youth need exposure to practical, specific techniques for imparting soft skills and building developmental relationships with youth.
- **Foster entrepreneurial thinking.** General, technical-vocational education, and other employability training programs should provide entrepreneurship skill-building for young people in and out of the formal school system.



Rana Plaza survivor Khaleda Begum has received skills training and is now working as a tailor. (C) ILO/Muntasir Mamun.

5. Enhance Assessment and Evaluation

A lack of rigorous and nuanced research and evaluation on soft skills formation and on interventions to foster them is limiting opportunities to scale effective approaches to soft skills development for youth employment.

- **Build better, more consistent soft skills assessment measures.** Further investment is required for the development of more rigorous and performance-based assessments of youth soft skills.⁶³ All programs should supplement their employment outcomes measurement with simple, user-friendly measures of youth soft skills development during and after the program experience. They would also enable researchers and evaluators to build a causal evidence base for the effectiveness of intervention types and program duration.
- **Evaluate for effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, in order to scale.** Deepening the understanding of different soft skill program and intervention types, in terms of intensity, cost, outcomes and longer-term impact, will foster the case for government and business to invest in soft skills programming at scale.
- **Pay equal attention to institutional culture and practices.** While youth soft skills assessment tools for measuring success at the individual level should continue to be refined, assessments are also needed of the culture, institutional structures and practices that surround youth in their schools, communities and workplaces.

Annexes

1. Methodology

This report was prepared by Clare Ignatowski and commissioned and edited by the Youth Employment Funders Group in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.

The report addresses five key questions:

1. What can we do about confusion in the field regarding what these skills should be called, how they are defined and how to measure them for program development and accountability?
2. What is the evidence that soft skills are important and that we know how to impart them?
3. What are the challenges and promising avenues for scaling soft skills development in formal, general and technical-vocational education systems?
4. What are the challenges and promising avenues for scaling soft skills development for out-of-school youth in non-formal training programs, workplaces and community-based settings?
5. What are critical areas of investment for program development, research and evaluation?

The report is a synthesis of recent domestic and international literature on soft skills, combined with consultations with key experts and a quantitative analysis of rigorously evaluated soft skills programs. A review was conducted of 160 documents, including systematic reviews, empirical research studies appearing in peer-reviewed academic journals, rigorous (experimental or quasi-experimental) program evaluations, practitioners' guides, consensus frameworks and policy studies. The document review was supplemented by interviews with approximately 20 practitioners, donors and experts active in the soft skills field. Drawing on an influential recent systemic review of youth employment programs,⁶⁴ Ignatowski conducted a qualitative and quantitative meta-analysis of those programs in the review that included a well-defined soft skills component. This analysis was focused on effectiveness as well as the

range of skills taught and the program modalities utilized. Validation of the report recommendations was conducted through feedback at several policymaker meetings and professional conferences in Africa and North America, by both Clare Ignatowski and members of the Youth Employment Funders Group.

A review was conducted of new research and “calls to action” that put forward youth soft skills development as key in reforming education and workforce preparation in both OECD and developing countries. For examples of this, refer to the Brookings Institution, the World Economic Forum, the Education Commission and the OECD.⁶⁵

The report builds on many recent studies that analyze the mechanisms of soft skills development and the effectiveness of programs designed to inculcate soft skills, including the following:

- A systematic review of programs to develop social-emotional skills that provides a programmatic analysis across life, including early childhood, in-school and out-of-school contexts.⁶⁶
- A meta-analysis that identifies which soft skills among many have the greatest breadth and strength of evidence for contributing to youth workforce success.⁶⁷
- A follow-on study that examines the overlap of soft skills for employment with positive youth outcomes in sexual and reproductive health and violence prevention.⁶⁸
- Studies that highlight key principles for the implementation of successful soft skills programs and converge on the importance of experiential learning and meaningful, supportive adult/youth relationships.⁶⁹
- A number of case studies that focus on scaling of higher-quality education, including soft skills development.⁷⁰

While the focus of these studies is on developing countries (both low- and middle-income countries), there are many lessons to be learned from OECD (high-income) countries. Therefore, the report draws on research from these regions when relevant.

2. Terminology

Soft skills are the mix of skills, attitudes, behaviours, personal qualities and mindsets that individuals use to be successful across different situations in work and life. They are developed over an individual's life span in a dynamic way in concert with other skills such as academic, technical and practical life skills.

The Youth Employment Funders Group prefers the term “soft skills” to describe a mix of skills (both non-cognitive and cognitive), attitudes, behaviours and mindsets, especially when referring to youth workforce and employment outcomes. We recognize that different formal general education systems may use the terms “socio-emotional skills,” “transferable skills” or “21st-century skills.” “Transferable skills” have been defined as “higher-order cognitive skills and non-cognitive skills that individuals use to be successful across different situations in work and life.”⁷¹ They include soft skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, leadership, perseverance, empathy and emotional regulation, but also skills that are not job-specific, such as financial and information technology literacy and entrepreneurship capabilities. “Employability skills” is often a term used to refer to a combination of soft skills and specific job-seeking skills such as interviewing and CV writing. Adolescent health programs may use the term “life skills” to refer to a mix of soft skills and sexual and reproductive health competencies. We also recognize the challenge of finding equivalent terms in different languages and for diverse cultural contexts.

A key challenge that the soft skills field faces is the variety of terms used for very similar personality traits, skills and behaviours, a variety rooted in diverse academic disciplines and fields. For example, consider the notion of “self-control.” While employers may use the terms “self-discipline” or “self-management,” psychologists refer to “constraint,” “self-regulation,” “emotional stability,” or its opposite, “externalizing behaviour.” “Self-regulation” is also heard in the fields of economics and education, but education also adds “rule-abiding,” “manages emotions” and “pays attention.”⁷² While this variation poses difficulties for monitoring and evaluation, the proliferation is also a reflection of the dynamism and holism of the field, and the nuances and history of each discipline's involvement with soft skills.



This young man is being trained in hospitality with CAP Youth Empowerment Institute in Kenya. Intersect for Mastercard Foundation.

End Notes

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51. With financial support from the International Labour Organization, Jose Manuel Romero provided this technical analysis of the ILO's systematic review of youth employment interventions: Kluge, J., Puerto, S., Robalino, D., Romero, J.M., Rother, F., Stöterau, J., Weidenkaff, F., and Witte, M., *Interventions to Improve the Labour Market Outcomes of Youth: A Systematic Review of Training, Entrepreneurship Promotion, Employment Services, and Subsidized Employment Interventions* (Geneva, The International Labour Organization, 2016). http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_508938.pdf.
52. An example from a middle-income country, Brazil, is Galpão Aplauso (see text box). In the interim period since the systemic review, four additional evaluations with experimental design have been identified: Akazi Kanoze (Rwanda), Alfateen (Tajikistan), Educate! (Uganda), and A Ganar (Honduras and Guatemala).
53. Social desirability bias is the tendency of survey respondents to respond in ways that will make them be viewed favourably by others. Reference bias is the tendency to make judgements based on one's own group rather than an objective reference point.
54. Galloway, T., Lippman, L., Burke, H., Diener, O., and Gates, S., *Measuring Soft Skills in International Youth Development Programs: A Review and Inventory of Tools* (Washington, DC, USAID, 2017).
55. West, M.R., *The Limitations of Self-Report Measures of Non-Cognitive Skills* (Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 2014).
56. Anchoring vignettes are questions about hypothetical situations added to a survey to help researchers correct for interpersonal differences in survey responses.
57. See footnote 34 for references.
58. Factors include: enabling policy environment, evidence, champions, stakeholder engagement, flexible financing and decentralization of education authority. Examples of case study syntheses include: Perlman Robinson, J., and Winthrop, R. (2016) and Novy-Marx, M. and AFIDEP for Mastercard Foundation (2017).
59. Lippman, L., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., Moore, K., *Key Soft Skills that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields*, (Washington, DC, USAID/Child Trends/FHI360, 2015). This study included not only youth's success in obtaining a job, but also promotion on the job, wages/income and entrepreneurship success.
60. Recommended frameworks have been developed by the OECD, World Bank (PRACTICE model), ACT, CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) and the National Research Council (USA). Over 45 soft skills frameworks are surveyed in Lippman, L. et al. (2015), Appendices A-D.
61. Experience from the adolescent health field is useful; see *Scaling Up Normative Change Interventions for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health* (Washington, DC, Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University, Save the Children and USAID, 2016).
62. Soares, F., Babb, S., Diener, O., Gates, S., and Ignatowski, C., *Guiding Principles for Building Soft Skills among Adolescents and Young Adults* (Washington, DC, USAID, 2017), <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-yp-guiding-principals-soft-skills.pdf>.
63. A review of existing soft skills assessment tools identifies ten tools that are most promising for adaptation to use in international settings (Galloway, T., et al., 2017).
64. Kluge, J., et al., *Interventions to Improve the Labour Market Outcomes of Youth: A Systematic Review of Training, Entrepreneurship Promotion, Employment Services, and Subsidized Employment Interventions*.
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71. Novy-Marx, M., and AFIDEP for Mastercard Foundation, *Skills at Scale: Transferable Skills in Secondary and Vocational Education in Africa* (Toronto, Mastercard Foundation, 2017); Brown, A.N., Rankin, K., Picon, M., and Cameron, D.B., *The State of Evidence on the Impact of Transferable Skills Programming on Youth in Low- and Middle-Income Countries* (New Delhi, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), 2015). http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer_public/2015/09/01/sp4-youth_and_transferable_skills.pdf.
72. Lippman, L., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., Moore, K., *Key "Soft Skills" that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus across Fields*.

Front Cover:

Thanks to the negotiation skills she has learned through SNV's Opportunities for Youth Employment program, Francisca has persuaded a few mini-supermarkets to sell her spice mixes in Moshi, Tanzania. Intersect for Mastercard Foundation.

A worker checks the temperature controllers at an aqua-product processing company in Binh Thuan Province. ILO in Asia and the Pacific. ©ILO/Nguyễn Việt Thanh.

Back Cover:

Students in ChildFund's Zambia Nurse and Life Skills Training Program. Intersect for Mastercard Foundation.

Young male trainees in Bangladesh's shipbuilding sector, Western Marine Institute, Chittagong, Bangladesh. ILO in Asia and the Pacific.

