THINK THANKS AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN AFRICA: WHAT COULD THEY DO?

Enrique Mendizabal, Director On Think Tanks
OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

Why should we care?
Policy ideas
Practice
Conclusions
WHY SHOULD THINK TANKS CARE?

- **Reason 1**: Because it is a **challenge** across the world (developing and developed). At the extreme, it is closely linked to radicalisation.

- **Reason 2**: Because young people are at risk of being **left behind**.

- **Reason 3**: Because the solution to youth unemployment carries huge **political capital** for the think tank that comes up with it.

- **Reason 4**: Because young people are an **untapped audience** for think tanks; one that has a huge potential to forward their cause in the future.

- **Reason 5**: The **moral argument**: Truth, Justice, Voice.

- An opportunity for think tanks to stakeout a piece of territory.
“Credibility can be broken down into four dimensions: scientific method, political independence, transparency and social legitimacy.”

Norma Correa
Universidad Católica del Perú

2018
On Think Tanks ANNUAL CONFERENCE
"Your brand needs to help you stake out a piece of territory: this is our territory, and any discussion without us is illegitimate."

John Schwartz
Soapbox
POLICY IDEAS: FOR EXAMPLE

- Information for better informed decision making
- Online/text-based jobsboards
- Work with new technological platforms (e.g. Uber)
- Technical/vocational secondary education and workplace experience/internships for taxes
- Differentiated labour regimes such as reduced employment
- Youth (Employment) Tsars

- “Personal education accounts”
- Improve the business environment with attention to the needs of young people
- Investments in wellbeing
- New curricula to focus on transferable skills:
- Integrated education and labour policy portfolios

Source: Many drawn from Nicole Golding at CSIS (https://www.csis.org/analysis/addressing-youth-employment-challenge-beyond-skills-gap) and Pablo Lavado at Universidad del Pacífico
LET’S REFLECT ON A DOUBLE BLUNDER

  - Approved then reverted
  - Withdrawn

Why?
- Poor policymaking practice
- Think tanks did not say a word
PRACTICE: HOW CAN THINK TANKS MAKE A CONTRIBUTION?

- Bridge the cultural divide
- Think about the future
- Look at the long-tails
- Create, use and share evidence
- Work in partnership
- Be political
According to King’s and Crewe’s book “The Blunders of our Governments”: those who design policy do not understand or have empathy for the experiences of those the policies are intended for.
“Are think tanks equipped to engage citizens? This is a key issue affecting the credibility of think tanks.”

Sonja Stojanovic Gajic
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy
BRIDGE THE CULTURAL DIVIDE

What can think tanks do:

- Diversity in age, gender and background
- Involve them and ask young people to join your think tank ([foraus](#))
- Reach out and communicate with them; in their own terms ([Well Told Story](#))
- Help design evidence informed work and career experiences for young people
“How can we design think tank organisations that ensure citizen voice and need (not the same) is heard at every level of decision making?”

Melanie Rayment
Design specialist
According to an Oxford study on the Future of Employment (from 2013!) the least safe jobs from AI are:

- Telemarketer: 99% (Chance of automation); Loan officer: 98%;
  Cashier: 97%; Paralegal and legal assistant: 94%; Taxi driver: 89%; Fast food cook: 81%

According to Martin Ford: “routine, repetitive and predictable”

But what about rural to urban migration, pressure over public services and housing, global trade trends, etc.?
THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

What can think tanks do:
- Undertake prospective research
- The Future of Work Review (RSA)
LOOK AT THE LONG-TAILS

The worst-off are and will be the most vulnerable and the hardest to help:
- Domestic workers (often very young)
- People with disabilities
- LGBTQ
- Women
- Indigenous populations
- The extreme poor
- The urban poor
LOOK AT THE LONG-TAILS

What can think tanks do:
- Make them and their needs visible (from Ruth Levine’s “moral case for evidence informed policy” = Truth, Justice, Voice)
- For instance, domestic workers (CIUP and others in Latin America and Asia)
- “Youth budget” (such as the Children’s budget by IDASA and CIUP)
- Why not set up issue specific think tanks/programmes?
Cities have unique challenges that other parts of the country do not face. They need thinking about them.

Ben Rogers
Centre for London
CREATE, USE AND SHARE EVIDENCE

Education and employment decisions are complex
Information is often lacking – precisely for those who are most vulnerable
Information about:
- Real costs and returns to education
- Job opportunities and career paths
CREATE, USE AND SHARE EVIDENCE

What can think tanks do:

• Build solutions, yourselves or in partnership (Ponte en Carrera by IPAE, CIUP and others)
• Rethink your communications – what you are planning to do now might not work any more
Effective communication is more critical than ever before in a world where information overload is a growing issue, and ‘fake news’ a sad reality.

Jeff Knezovich and Carolina Kern
Communication specialists

2018

On Think Tanks
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Employers can change their:
- Recruiting practices (e.g. more formal and transparent, less focus on degrees and more on competencies)
- Talent management practices (e.g. on the job training, mentoring, etc.)

New technological platforms offer young people opportunities to work formally.

Redesign education to respond to the real experience of the youth.
WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

What can think tanks do:
• Work closely with the private sector to help them understand the youth
• Involve them in think tank projects and boards
• Explore new approaches to co-design policy solutions
What does a new kind of leadership look like? On Think Tanks 2017 Fellows present at the OTT Conference.

Cristina Bacalso  
Youth Policy Labs

Renata Skardžiūtė – Kereselidze  
Georgian Institute of Politics

Stella Utica  
Institute for Public Policy

Simonida Kačarska  
European Policy Institute
Differentiated (and transitory) labour regimes might help young people to join the workforce.

Changes in curricula might lead to new transferable competencies for current and future jobs.

Changes in the secondary and tertiary education policy to incorporate vocational education and professional job placements can support the disadvantaged.

But these are highly political changes and can backfire (e.g. *Ley Pulpín (1 and 2)* in Peru).
Organisations are not well prepared to address the attacks from populism, which seek to distract (from the issue) divide (civil society) and detach (from engagement).

Hans Gutbrod
Transparify
BE POLITICAL

What can think tanks do:

- Make a long term bet on youth unemployment
- Develop and nurture partnerships and alliances (build strength in numbers not just arguments)
- Encourage a national conversation/dialogue about the problems and solutions proposed
- Build consensus with the youth
- Inform and support “front line players” – teachers, company bosses – about benefits of reform
CONCLUSION

Think tanks can and should play a role in addressing youth unemployment; driven by pragmatic or moral arguments.
CONCLUSION: THINK TANKS MUST

Reach out to the youth as an audience and support base (and not just an object of study) and study the youth as individuals and not as a single group.

Reflect on how they undertake research, communicate it and manage the organisation by:
- Looking ahead and incorporating trends in their research
- Communicating through new channels and using new arguments
- Involving more young people and different backgrounds

Work with others (and through others) – and not just other think tanks

Be political (because, well, you are)
® onthinktanks.org
® @onthinktanks
® fb.com/onthinktanks