



Session name: 1.1 Young People develop the Market-Relevant Skills for Work and Life, with focus on the most vulnerable

Session date: Day 1, 23rd May 2022, 13:30-15:00pm

Session Objective

Children and young people in the Middle East and North Africa region face unprecedented challenges – in terms of learning, skilling, social inclusion and transition into decent employment – aggravated by political instability and conflicts. Young people, especially girls and young women, who are from poor families, from rural areas, refugee and other forcibly displaced communities, or with disabilities are those most likely left behind. Market-relevant skills: Education and training systems across the region are often constrained by outdated pedagogy, learning techniques and examination practices, and are not aligned with contemporary realities and labour market requirements. Traditional teacher-centred and knowledge-based approaches are failing to develop the skills that are essential for lifelong learning, employability/decent work, personal empowerment and active citizenship. The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has further amplified these challenges and disparities. The pandemic has further stressed the increasing importance of life skills – to navigate anxiety and foster resilience and empathy among young people, to develop critical thinking skills in the context of the ‘infodemic’ and fake news, and to build the self-learning and communication capacity of young people during times of remote and blended learning.

This session aimed at:

Further unpack the issue and discuss challenges in delivering market-relevant skills for work and life, with focus on the most vulnerable young people. Brainstorm and share innovative, relevant and effective approaches towards market-relevant learning, skilling and transition into decent employment. Enable exchange of good practices on young people’s learning, skilling and transition into decent employment.

Session Speakers

Panel 1: Setting the Scene

Bassem Nasir [Moderator]	Education Specialist, UNICEF HQ
Haytham El Ourady [Co-Moderator]	Young Person, Morocco
Marwan Tarazi	Director Center for Continuing Education, Birzeit University
Sidi Ali Maelainin	Corporate Social Responsibility Manager, IBM
Donatella Di Vozzo	Policy Advisor, European Training Foundation (ETF)
Milena Castellnou	Chief Programs Officer, Education Outcome Fund (EOF)

Panel 2: From Commitment to Action

Oroub Al Abed [Moderator]	Lead Researcher, Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS)
Anis Mansour [Co-Moderator]	Young Person, Tunisia
Nawras Al-Kindi	Young Person, Oman
Dr. Mohamed Mehaged	HE Deputy Minister of Education, Egypt
Ehab Al Qadri	National Sector Skills Council, Jordan
Ziad Jwelis	National TVET Commission, Palestine
Mohamed Guireh Galab	Chamber of Commerce, Djibouti
Salah Bin Ghanim Al-Ali	HE Minister of Youth, Qatar

Session Outcomes

The session was opened by a roleplay of two young people – **Shahed Trabulsi** from Jordan and **Najib Matter** from Lebanon – reflecting on a job-interview setting and challenges of matching those market-relevant skills demanded by the labour market with the skills young graduates have learned in school.

Screen projections summarized **recommendations from young people** reflecting on market-relevant skills discussed during the Virtual Round Table ‘Young People’s Learning and Skilling’, November 2021:

- Ensure **curriculum reflects market-relevant skills**, align with the contemporary realities of the labor market
- Foster **collaboration between ministries and private sector** in curriculum development and teaching practices
- Strengthen **pedagogical approach towards fostering market-relevant skills** and raise efficiency of educators
- Activate **young people as changemaker**, encourage investment in young people and showcase benefits
- Strengthen **young people’s exposure to the world-of-work**, internships, apprenticeship and on-the-job-learning
- Provide **career guidance to young people on market-relevant skills** and labor market demands to secure a job

Panel 1: Setting the Scene

During the first panel discussion – moderated by **Bassem Nasir**, Education Specialist from UNICEF together with **Haytham Al Ourady** from Morocco – panelists further unpacked challenges in delivering market relevant skills for work and life and experiences across the region.

Marwan Tarazi, Director of the Center for Continuing Education from Birzeit University, reflected on the importance of **integrating life skills into teaching and learning** from pre-primary education up to secondary education. Those life skills, such as creativity, critical-thinking and cooperation, are essential for children’s and young people’s lifelong learning, employability, personal empowerment and active citizenship. **Sidi Ali Maelainin** from IBM further stressed the **importance of digital skills in this digital era**, where advances in technology call for new skills seemingly overnight and digital skills become more and more important to navigate everyday life and the changing nature of work. Zooming in on **technical and vocational education and training** (TVET), **Donatella Di Vozzo** from ETF reflected on the perception of TVET as ‘second-chance pathway’ across the region and how a more positive perception and demand for TVET could be created. Evidence indicates that graduates from the TVET pathways are more likely to find a job, compared to graduates from university. Lastly, **Milena Castellnou** from EOF emphasized the importance of ensuring sufficient and effective financing of education and training, and how **results-based financing** can support achieving concrete results for young people’s learning and skilling. Sustainable and equitable financing in education has been an issue before and has been further aggravated now due to the COVID-19 pandemic – the interruptive impact on education calls for increased investment in learning and skilling, yet the impact on national economies reduces fiscal space.

Screen projections summarized key **evidence from data and research** to inform and frame the discussion:

- The MENA region has the **highest youth unemployment rates globally**, and female youth are more than twice as likely to be Not in Education, Employment of Training (NEET Rate).
- The region has the **lowest private rates of return to education** – the increase in future income per one additional year of schooling.
- Young people are **leaving school without the skills they need to succeed** in today’s economy and the changing nature of work, jobs and skills.
- Employers reporting a **widespread shortage of crucial life skills** such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving and communication.

Panel 2: From Commitment to Action

During the second panel discussion – Moderated by **Oroub Al Abed**, Lead Researcher from the Center for Lebanese Studies together with **Anis Mansour** from Tunisia – panelists exchanged good practices on young people’s learning, skilling and transition into decent employment from across the MENA region.

His Excellency **Dr. Mohamed Mehaged**, Deputy Minister of Education in Egypt, presented on the **education sector reform ‘Education 2.0’** as one of the most comprehensive education reforms in the MENA region right now. Through this, Egypt aims at integrating life skills across the pre-primary, primary and secondary education curriculum, fostering digital learning, and improving alignment between education and the needs of the labour market. **Ehab Al Qadri** from the National Sector Skills Council (Garment) in Jordan, reflected on the **important role of National Sector Skills Councils** (NSSC) as one of the measures to engage the private sector in curriculum development to make the skills system more responsive to labour market needs. **Ziad Jweli** from the National TVET Commission in Palestine, shared promising **skills practices that are helping young people to acquire market-relevant skills** and to make the skills system responsive to the future of work and lifelong learning in Palestine. **Mohamed Guireh Galab** from the Chamber of Commerce in Djibouti, emphasized the importance of **young people receiving career guidance and obtaining information of new job market opportunities**. Finally, His Excellency **Salah Bin Ghanim Al-Ali**, Minister of Youth in Qatar, shared his remarks with the panel emphasizing the importance of having young people’s skilling high on the agenda for the sake of young people now as well as future generations.

The session was closed by **Seiko Sugita** from the UNESCO and **Reem Jeibat** from UNRWA.