Concept Note

Expert Group Meeting

"The Role of Families and Family Policy in Supporting Youth Transitions"

Doha, December 11-12, 2018

Background

The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, in collaboration with the Division for Inclusive Social Development of the Department of Economic and Social affairs (UNDESA) and the International Federation for Family Development (IFFD), is organizing an Expert Group Meeting on "The Role of Families and Family Policy in Supporting Youth Transitions" to be held 11-12 December 2018 in Doha, Qatar.

Navigating the transition to adulthood, mainly from school and/or university to the workforce, is often a challenging process for adolescents and young people. The delayed transition from school to work prevents young people from gaining a sense of independence and affects other pathways to adulthood, including marriage, family formation, and civic participation. This waithood period in the lives of youth is a source of wasted potential, which can lead to frustration, radicalization and unrest.

A great deal of work has gone into studying the phenomenon of youth transitions to adulthood.[1] However, little emphasis has been given to the role of families[2] in youth transitions, especially to the role that they play in influencing career aspirations, providing career-related planning activities, and ultimately shaping post-school employment outcomes for young people. Instead, research on youth and their related transitions have tended to explore the economic and cultural capital families pass down to their offspring. Family research, however, has been concerned with an array of issues ranging from child poverty to the reconciliation of paid employment. In order to support families in dealing with such issues, more research is needed.

Families help guide youth in choosing career options and in supporting their transition to economic independence and towards family formation. The role those parents and other members of the family play as role models and in setting minimum expectations in terms of educational and professional attainment may be of significance to youth. Family support can improve youth employment choices by allowing them to access family networks, forgo less attractive job offers, and mitigate information asymmetries that might discourage firms from hiring them. Families can also inadvertently hinder youth transitions by insisting on a prolonged job search and influencing youth expectations on the realities of the labor market. Ignoring the essential role that families play in influencing their youth's transition from school to work will lead policymakers and the wider development community to miss an opportunity to address the challenges of youth transitions and social integration, especially towards the achievement of youth-related SDG targets.

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[1]Wyn, Johanna. Conceptualizing transitions of adulthood. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, 143, 2014. P.1-16.
Thomson, Rachel and Janet Holland. *Youth values and transitions to adulthood: an empirical investigation*. London South Bank University, 2014.
Bowman, Dina, Joseph Borlagden and Sharon Bond. *Making sense of youth transitions from education to work*. Brotherhood of St. Lawrence, 2015.
Hardgrove, Abby, Kirrily Pells, Jo Boyden and Paul Dornan. *Youth vulnerabilities in life course transitions*. UNDP Human Development Report Office, 2014.
[2]Due to the contested nature of the definition of the family, no one specific definition will be provided. The main purpose of this EGM is to examine the influences of family members on youth choices, and not to provide a definition of the family.

Three of the four explicit mentions of youth in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda include:

- "Substantially increase the number of youth (and adults) who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (Target 4.4.)
- "Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people (and persons with disabilities), and equal pay for work of equal value" (Target 8.5.)
- "Substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training." (Target 8.6.)

Overall, four main topics (and their associated questions) will be discussed during the expert group meeting:

1. Youth, Adulthood and Social Integration

Education systems, markets, policies, social environments and social perspectives all have an impact on youth transitions to adulthood. Research shows, "young people, both through choice and coercion, are responding as best as they can to their circumstances- they are negotiating contemporary economic and social changes through new and diverse ways of relating to transitional processes."[3]

International Labor Organization (ILO) reports have shown that there is a link between youth unemployment and social exclusion. They demonstrate that the "inability to find employment creates a sense of uselessness and idleness among young people that can lead to increased crime, mental health problems, violence, conflicts and drug taking."[4] However, getting a job is not an end in and of itself; rather, it is a way to pursue further transitions and different life cycles.

Given this context, how have social behaviors, considerations, and social integration affected youth choices? What are the challenges of social integration for youth?

2. Role of Families in Supporting Youth Transitions

The UN report shows that "the social protection function performed by families is especially important in times of increased uncertainty and vulnerability. Families find it more and more difficult, however, to fulfil these multiple roles and tackle all responsibilities entrusted, either traditionally or by default, to them. As extended family networks get smaller owing to changes in living arrangements and family size, families struggle to fulfil their mutual obligations towards all family members, young and old. Furthermore, rapid socio-economic transformations, often combined with the eroding capacity of the State to protect households from their negative impacts through social policy interventions, leave a large number of families poor and vulnerable."[5]

As a result, what is the role of the family in supporting youth transitions and their employment outcomes? What are the challenges that the family faces in supporting youth transitions?

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[3]Wyn, Johanna and Rob White. *Negotiating Social Change: the Paradox of Youth*. Youth and Society 32.2, 2000, 167.
[4]Global Employment Trends for Youth: Special issue on the impact of the global economic crisis on youth. International Labour Organization, 2010.
[5]Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the international year of the family and beyond, *General assembly Economic and Social Council*, 2010, A/66/62, 4.

The following factors influence this role:

- Family Networks

According to existing research, social capital in the form of "family networks, social networks, [as well as] professional and recreational networks," have a significant effect on entrepreneurial career choices. The purpose of these connections is to provide both economic and social guidance that youth may not have otherwise.[6]

What are the possible functions of family networks in supporting youth in obtaining employment opportunities? What are their advantages and disadvantages?

- Family Expectations and Aspirations

Families tend to allow stereotypes and biases regarding job attainment to limit youth job searches to specific fields and sectors. Moreover, when families spend a great deal of money on the education of youth, they usually expect them to attain high earning jobs. This can lead to an expectations mismatch that prolongs youth's job search. Therefore, what is the role of the family in setting expectations on the kinds of jobs that are acceptable as well as the wages youth should earn?

During the job search period, young people rely on their family to provide for them. What types of support do families provide to young people? Further, youth usually live with their families until they have secured a job and/or the resources they need to set up a family of their own. This transition period causes various consequences to youth career timelines, as well as to the families themselves. What are these consequences, and how do they influence youth and their families?

- Parenting

The role of parenting on youth outcomes is an important factor to consider. This raises the importance of parenting education. Research shows, "most neglectful parents are not uninvolved on purpose. While experts agree that the results of neglectful parenting are extremely harmful, they also acknowledge that many parents who fall into this style do not intend to do so. Some parents simply… get caught up in their own lives and fail to pay much attention to their children. However, many uninvolved parents are often raised by uninvolved parents themselves, which leads to the perpetuation of the style because they had no other role models to learn from..."[7]

Given the aforementioned, how does parenting influence youth choices and vocational development, including youth's interests, goals, and values related to career planning? What are the opportunities of parenting education in supporting youth and youth choices?

- Family Structures

Family structures affect youth's future development. In fact, "young people who go through numerous transitions are expected to experience more compromised well-being than those who experience no such transitions or only one." [8] This will in turn affect their choices as they

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[6]Ali, Amjad, Shafiqa Ahsan and Sophia F. Dziegielewski. *Social and family capital and youth career intension: a case study in Pakistan*. Cogent Business and management 4, 2017. P. 12.

[7]Bush, Sharon. "What does parenting style say about parents?" *Huffington Post*. 29 August 2016. Accessed 29 March 2018.

[8]Crosnoe, Robert and Shannon E. Cavanagh. Families with children and adolescents: a review, critique, and future agenda. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 72.3. p.4.

transition to adulthood. Therefore, how and why do diverse family structures (e.g. single parent households) influence youth education and employment outcomes?

3. International Perspectives on Youth Policies

Youth policies address different issues that affect youth. On an international scale, present day youth policies are based on the 1998 Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. Moreover, "the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) by the United Nations… has been drawn upon to identify the minimum key policy areas in which young people should be specifically considered… these include employment, poverty, leisure, participation, HIV/AIDS, girls and young women, and armed conflict."[9]

In terms of social integration, inclusive youth participation in planning, implementing and monitoring processes is also important, "many governments recognize that young people should be actively involved in the design, development and implementation of youth policies and programs. Governments ensure youth involvement by fostering information-sharing and including young people in decision-making at all stages of the policymaking process, making sure that youth participation is substantive and consistent."[10]

What policies can help engage youth in the policy making process? What policies can reinforce the family's role in supporting youth transitions from school to work and address youth employment challenges? What family policies might help improve youth outcomes?

4. Role of Youth in the SDGs

Effective youth transitions are not only significant for the development of youth, but also for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In fact, "we pay a high cost when our development policies and programmes fail to recognize the particular needs and aspirations of youth."[11] Therefore, supporting healthy youth transitions is of paramount importance to the achievement of the SDGs.

What policies might help countries improve youth outcomes, moving towards the youth-related SDG targets (Target 4.4, 8.5 and 8.6)? What are the challenges that youth face in the achievement of youth related SDGs? How important is a healthy transition from youth to adulthood towards and in the achievement of SDGs?

Purpose

The primary objective of the EGM is to bring together international experts to discuss the role of families in supporting youth transitions from school to work and, ultimately, youth employment outcomes in order to achieve SDGs. The EGM attempt to address the following questions:

- How do families influence youth career and employment decisions and outcomes? How do family structural variables (e.g., parental occupation, education, poverty) and

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[9] Bacalso, Christina, and Alex Farrow. Youth policies from around the world: international practices and country examples. Youth Policy Labs, 2016, p. 1.

[10] Promoting social integration through social inclusion. United Nations General Assembly, 2017, A/72/189. 11.

[11] Hwang, Sunyoung and Siwon Kim. UN and SDGs: A Handbook for Youth. UN ESCAP East and North East Asia Office, 2017, p.30.

family process variables (e.g., family involvement, parenting, support, and expectations) influence career development and outcomes for young people?

- How has family support affected job search dynamics among youth and under what conditions has this helped youth secure better jobs?

- What policies can help reinforce the family's role in supporting their youth's transition from school to work and help address youth employment challenges?

- What family policies might reinforce youth employment policies and help countries to improve youth outcomes, towards youth-related SDG targets (targets 4.4, 8.5 and 8.6)?

Meeting Structure

A minimum of twenty experts will participate in the expert group meeting. Experts will include academics, and practitioners in the fields of youth, family policy, social integration, economics, and social policy.

Experts will be asked to provide a paper, make a short presentation, participate in discussions and give their expert opinions and policy recommendations.

Deliverables

Background papers (5-7 pages, single-spaced, excluding references and statistical tables) prepared by each expert on issues in the annotated agenda, including policy recommendations.