



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 December 2017
English
Original: Spanish

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-sixth session

31 January–7 February 2018

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by Fundación Novia Salcedo, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

A youth employability model as an accelerator of sustainable development for all

We want to share with the members of this Commission the contribution of Novia Salcedo Foundation to the eradication of poverty through the establishment and development of an employability model aimed at young people, which can serve as a frame of reference for the design and deployment of specific programmes and actions to ensure that the world's young people have access to decent and quality employment.

Scientific literature has stressed the importance of young people beginning their working lives in jobs tailored to their level of training, as reflected in the article entitled "Five Characteristics of Youth Unemployment in Europe: Flexibility, Education, Migration, Family Legacies, and EU Policy", by O'Reilly and others. The acceptance by young people of jobs for which they are overqualified often becomes chronic for the remainder of their working lives, resulting in poor professional development and reduced purchasing power as they age, leading to higher rates of poverty.

Despite having a greater proportion of young people with a higher education than the European average (23.1 per cent, compared with 17.6 per cent among young people aged 20 to 24, and 41.0 per cent, compared with 38.2 per cent among young people aged 25 to 34 in 2016, according to Eurostat), Spain also has a higher proportion of young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (47.7 per cent, compared to the European Union's 28.3 per cent in 2016 according to Eurostat) and one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Europe (41.5 per cent, compared to 17.3 per cent for the European Union in 2017 according to Eurostat). Given the overqualification (that is, a surplus of advanced training and a shortage in the supply of job offers at a corresponding level) of youth in Spain, it is the duty and responsibility of all, starting with public institutions, to provide young people with access to jobs that improve their ability to advance professionally in the future.

The work of Novia Salcedo Foundation is to tackle youth unemployment by improving youth employability. This mission is carried out through collaboration with young people, companies and stakeholders in the environment, and it takes the form of guidance and practical business training programmes, always guaranteeing compliance with the quality standards proposed by the International Labour Organization.

In 2016, Novia Salcedo Foundation trained 1,021 youths to improve their employability and managed on-the-job practical training for 867 young people, with the collaboration of 323 companies. A total of 675 young people signed employment contracts after their training with the Foundation.

In addition, the Foundation shares its concerns related to the problem of youth unemployment in order to raise awareness among companies, youth, government entities and society as a whole of the need to act in a coordinated and cooperative manner to contribute to the improvement of working conditions for young people. The organization of the Bilbao Youth Employment Forum, to be held for the fourth time in November 2017, or the coordination of Project Pegasus, the international campaign for the decade of youth employment (www.youthemploymentdecade.org) are some examples of such efforts.

However, as may be seen from the data above, major efforts are still required to reach a satisfactory situation in the area of youth employment, especially in the current context. Therefore, the Foundation has embarked on the challenging task of building a youth employability model to serve as a firm foundation from which it can

launch, as effectively as possible, its efforts to promote the growth of youth employment and thereby cut poverty rates.

This theoretical model is based on the premise that, as a result of rapid technological progress and the social and economic changes that such advances entail, organizations will have to evolve towards models of organizational culture based on the involvement of workers in management, transparency, the establishment of teams capable of cooperation and the creation of shared knowledge. For their part, young people will have to develop a set of key skills that will enable them to grow in this new working environment, which will be more innovative and flexible than the current one, such as the ability to cooperate with different people, to be creativity and to participate in leadership. This model involves not only the eradication of poverty by improving youth employability; one of its implicit aspects is the need for the involvement of workers in organizations through active participation and the management of benefits. Such involvement ultimately encourages the development of fairer organizational management models, which will reduce discrimination and inequality.

Based on this approach, through Novia Salcedo Foundation we have begun to collect information from the organizations with which we collaborate and the young people with whom we work. An analysis of the information collected will enable us to discover which variables, out of all those involved in youth employability, are most important in determining proper career development.

We have collected information from 304 young people on their job skills, work motivation and values. The skills analysis, conducted through interviews, shows that there are two main kinds, which we have called cross-cutting skills (including responsibility, teamwork, empathy, flexibility and learning capacity) and innovative skills (namely creativity, entrepreneurship, self-confidence and leadership).

The second group would to a certain degree constitute the skills that, in our view, young people will need to develop to succeed in the new labour context. In addition, young people earned a lower score in innovative skills (an average of 3.89 out of 6) than in “cross-cutting skills” (4.86 out of 6, on average), which emphasizes the need to train them in “innovative skills”, as those are the ones that will most improve their employability.

In addition, we also know that young people’s motivation and values are in line with the model that we propose. When looking for work, young people prioritize such things as career development or a job that is related to their studies, and appreciate positions that offer autonomy, a chance to develop in new areas, a results-oriented entrepreneurial culture and the ability to contribute through their work to improvements for society.

Thanks to 85 of the young people who have had practical experience in a company, we now know that organizational transparency is one of the variables most closely related to the satisfaction young people feel with regard to their experience in an organization, along with a perception of improved employability. Other variables, such as participation in the organization or the effects of different kinds of leadership, remain to be tested.

Although the above data are limited and provisional, they offer highly valuable information that will be supplemented in the future. In addition, the model offers a new appreciation of the problem of youth employment by involving both young people and companies. Indeed, this is its most valuable aspect: recognizing the responsibility of young people in developing their own employability through skills that empower them by giving them a capacity to act. At the same time, it recognizes

the need for companies to become engaged and move towards new management models that are more worker-inclusive.

It must not be forgotten that all these efforts aim to eradicate poverty, in this case through improvements in the employability of young people and the quality of employment.

Our future actions will be aimed at further strengthening the model, testing it and changing any aspects that do not match our forecasts. In addition to training youth in innovative skills to improve their employability, it will be necessary to educate businesses in order to generate a culture of transparency, cooperation and participation that involves workers in their management.

Finally, another valuable feature of this model is its replicability outside the Spanish context, taking into account the particular circumstances of each region or country that might affect its application, such as the youth unemployment rate or the dominant entrepreneurial culture.
