



Association internationale d'orientation scolaire et professionnelle – AIOSP
International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance - IAEVG
Internationale Vereinigung für Bildungs- und Berufsberatung - IVBBB
Asociación Internacional para la Orientación Educativa y Profesional - AIOEP

IAEVG Communiqué on the Social and Economic Inclusion of NEETS/NINIS

On the occasion of the International IAEVG-Conference “Guidance for Building the Future”, the IAEVG Board of Directors publishes the following press release/statement, on the social and economic inclusion of NEETS (Youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

Why NEETS?

There is growing concern, worldwide, about the number of youth who are not participating in education, employment, or training. There are approximately 71 million unemployed youth worldwide and 156 million young workers living in poverty (International Labour Organization, 2017). According to the ILO, a priority policy issue is the underutilization of labour and especially youth participation in the labour force of many countries. Volatile and unpredictable labour markets impact rates of social and economic participation. Variations in rates of youth unemployment and underemployment between and within countries generally reflect social and economic conditions in national and local contexts.

There are both immediate and long-term effects for youth whose lives are disconnected from a sense of belonging and mattering, learning, productivity, inclusion, and making economic contributions through the social institutions of education and employment. Statistics that show persistently high rates of NEETS over several years may lead to a sense of complacency about the status quo, justify failure to take action, or be used as a reason to limit resources made available to youth as an acceptable social practice. The use of statistics alone obscures the multiple barriers for overcoming inequitable access to social resources that support positive engagement in education, employment, or training. When we address the situation of NEETS, it is important to consider differential rates of participation by youth from lower socioeconomic classes, racialized ethnic backgrounds, diverse religions, genders, and/or indigenous youth.

An examination of the status of youth must also consider the extent to which many youth are underemployed, due to ongoing labour market volatility and other pressures in the labour market that increase job competition and the scarcity of employment. Youth who are hired at entry-level, low-skilled positions are typically disadvantaged as lower wage earners. Youth require opportunities in the workplace for training and/or incentives to increase their workplace skills through continuing education. Youth who have been engaged in higher education may experience discouragement and disenfranchisement when they cannot secure employment commensurate with their educational credentials, when they face escalating rates of financial burden for higher education, and when they see few options for improving their future. In addition, young people in many countries will need to change jobs a number of times across their working lives and may need assistance in navigating the resulting employment and life transitions.

The consequences of unemployment and underemployment for mental health are well documented. Increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and other forms of stress are experienced by youth when they do not feel they have a sense of direction for their education, hope for their future participation in the labour market, or ways of contributing to a society in which paid employment is a marker of adulthood. Families also shoulder increased financial burden in



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supporting youth for longer period of time into adulthood, risking the financial stability of parents into their retirement years. The intergenerational effects are also of concern for the children of NEETS, and how they will be affected through the role modelling and resources required to access education and employment.

Role of Educational and Vocational Guidance

Educational and career guidance professionals have key responsibilities for working directly with youth to help them access education and to prepare for participation in the workplace. Educational and vocational guidance practitioners also have leadership roles to play in designing and evaluating programs for youth, for building effective partnerships in schools and in the community, and for advocating on behalf of youth. However, the issues associated with NEETS require attention at broader systemic, organizational, and political levels. Prevention programs are needed to support youth at risk for early school leaving and to support youth to experience positive connections between education and employment. Addressing this social issue requires a shared responsibility between systems of education and employment. There is often a disconnect or a mismatch between the curricula of educational institutions and the expectations of employers for preparing students to be workers, as many employers believe that students are not well prepared to be workers. Educational reform is needed alongside the active participation of employers to support youth through proactive hiring, mentoring, and training. Proactive government policies and resource allocation are required to address the chronic issues of youth unemployment and underemployment. We simply cannot wait for current economic forces to improve; there is a generation of youth whose lives are at stake, while their social and economic participation in society is jeopardized.

Educational, Social and Labour Policy Implications

IAEVG, as the largest worldwide guidance association, appeals to practitioners, policy makers, and employers, to increase their efforts to support youth to stay in school, to continue educational reform, and to successfully integrate youth into the labour market in jobs that are meaningful and sustainable. IAEVG members have an important role to play in leading and advocating for youth through working in partnership with stakeholders to support the educational attainment and employment of youth. Coordinated efforts and shared responsibility will help to ensure that youth experience meaningful connections between education and employment for themselves, for their peers, and for the next generation of youth who will be strongly influenced by the experience of youth today.