

ON THINK TANKS



# 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

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Image: Nicolás Braguinsky

braguinskyCascini



“Your brand needs to help you stakeout a piece of territory: this is our territory, and any discussion without us is illegitimate.”

John Schwartz  
Soapbox

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# 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

- Ley Pulpín 1 (2014–15): Differentiated labour regimes legislation
  - Approved then reverted
- Ley Pulpín 2 (2018): Workplace experience legislation
  - Withdrawn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





# BRIDGE THE CULTURAL DIVIDE

- According to King's and Crewe's book "[The Blunders of our Governments](#)": those who design policy do not understand of 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

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# 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

2018

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# THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

- 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
  - LGBTB
  - 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- challenges that other parts of the country do not face. They need thinking about them.”

Ben Rogers  
Centre for London

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# 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

tt 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

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# 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 Kacarska**  
European Policy Institute

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# BE POLITICAL

- 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

2018

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# 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)





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