



SOFT SKILLS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN ALGERIA

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

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Research conducted in September-October 2018; Analyzed December-February 2019

by Catherine A. Honeyman, PhD

with Andrew Farrand, Zobida Tadj, Mehdi Bentoumi, Latifa Dehane, and Abdallah Talhi

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What do youth need in order to gain employment in Algeria? International research, employer feedback, and Algerian youth perspectives themselves do not always agree—but, when analyzed together, they provide a coherent direction for future employment promotion efforts in the country. The Youth Employment Project (YEP), funded by the U.S. State Department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and implemented by World Learning in partnership with nine Algerian technical and vocational institutes, presents a response to this question that is relevant for all education and training providers as well as governmental and non-governmental promoters of youth in Algeria and the region.

Bringing together qualitative evidence from 90 employed and unemployed young women and men in six *wilayas* of Algeria, as well as data from interviews with employers from around the country, this research complements the Youth Employment Project’s biannual large-scale employment tracer studies, which gather data on the employment status of thousands of young project beneficiaries twice per year. The in-depth view offered by this qualitative research suggests that Algerian youth most need to develop 12 specific soft skills and 6 core functional job search skills in order to gain access to employment, or create their own through entrepreneurship:

Figure 1: 18 Skills Algerian Youth Need to Gain Employment



Intrapersonal

- Positive self-concept
- Self-motivation
- Perseverance
- Adaptability
- Managing emotions
- Goal-orientation
- Conscientiousness



Interpersonal

- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Professionalism



Cognitive

- Problem-solving
- Planning & Time management



Functional

- Language skills
- IT/Software skills
- Career planning
- Job search strategies
- CVs and online profiles
- Job interviews

These 12 soft skills and 6 functional job search skills can help youth overcome the significant challenges they face in the Algerian employment context—challenges such as low wages, gaps between their skills and those sought by employers, limited availability of entry-level work in many fields, difficulties with distance and residency requirements, regulatory obstacles, nepotism, gender discrimination, lack of career preparation support from traditional educational institutions, and even lack of family support.

This research also clearly shows the ways in which the Youth Employment Project has already succeeded in building many of these necessary job search and soft skills. With its current soft skills and employability skills training modules, taught through an experiential learning methodology, and additional offerings including individual career counseling, career fairs, and two dozen different types of technical trainings, the project has reached over 9,000 youth to date.

Figure 2: Skills the Current YEP Model Builds

Qualitative evidence shows all these skills are being built; with the strongest findings shown in darker colors.



The qualitative evidence from this research demonstrates the success of the current YEP programming in developing **core soft skills youth need**, including positive self-concept, communication skills, and social skills like teamwork and networking, as well as self-motivation and goal setting. The young Algerians participating in this project are also being well prepared in creating customized personal statements and CVs that respond directly to employer needs, participating confidently in job interviews, and developing their career goals and employment search plans.

Aligning with World Learning’s values of promoting social inclusion and intercultural understanding, this research also shows the powerful impact of learning about diversity—and coming to understand our own unique strengths in the process.

“Exchange with other students of the career center was amazing,” remarked one young man. “People have taught me how to talk, when to talk, and that you don’t have to talk all the time. The diversity of educational backgrounds was very enriching. Others add value from their own experiences. There was this particular woman who inspired me because, even though she had a child that she had to take care of, she would show up to class and learn while bringing her child with her. It gave me so much motivation. I developed my social skills and widened my network.”

Another young woman highlighted the importance of having a plan and receiving support to overcome the obstacles in the way to finding work. “The weakness that I had is that I did not know how to search for a job,” she said. “I did not even have an idea about all the steps that job-seekers should follow. I learned how to write a CV and a Cover Letter, I learned how to draw my career path and how to overcome the ‘Experience’ obstacle that all job-seekers fear, through volunteering and joining associations. [I also got] continuous support and encouragement from my career counselor when preparing for the interview, because I stress a lot. After the Soft Skills trainings, I started as an intern at the ‘Ecole Chantier’ of [---] association to gain more experience, and also I was a facilitator at cultural events. These steps, although they seem small, helped me to become more professional.”

Ultimately, the purpose of this research is to refine and improve the Youth Employment Project curriculum still further and offer feedback to the many career centers that have begun in Algeria over the past several years. The report concludes with six priority recommendations: train career counselors in a revised curriculum, revisit the suite of technical and vocational trainings, support career centers to develop job shadowing agreements with local employers, invest in orienting employers better for the job fairs, build career center sustainability, and consider future project possibilities in earlier stage career advising, business incubation, and business management consulting services to promote employment growth.

Together, these recommendations will allow the new YEP-sponsored national career center federation, Techghil, to offer the targeted and strategic support that can unlock opportunity for Algerian youth across the country.

INTRODUCTION: VALUING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON SKILLS NEEDS

There has been rising global interest in teaching “soft skills” to youth over the past two decades. This interest has led to multiple recent large-scale reviews recommending the most crucial skills to teach for different goals, from sustainable development, to youth peacebuilding, to youth employment.¹ Yet this research has not always taken into account specific youth contexts and the voices of youth themselves.

This report offers one such contribution, reporting on empirical qualitative research conducted with 90 youth in Algeria as they discussed their perspectives on the skills needed to obtain employment and take on productive adult roles in their own contexts. This research was undertaken as part of the Youth Employment Project (YEP), funded by the US Department of State’s Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and implemented by World Learning in 9 *wilayas* of Algeria since September 2015, and adds a new dimension to the quantitative tracer studies conducted semi-annually with a larger sample of the over 9,000 youth trained to date through the project.

BACKGROUND

Soft skills has been defined as “a broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, attitudes, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals” (Lippman, et al, 2015).² Soft skills often fall into two domains— intrapersonal, or managing the self, and interpersonal, or relating to others. Some also include certain cognitive or higher-order thinking skills within the soft skills domain, such as critical thinking and problem solving.

Recent large-scale literature reviews of studies in the fields of psychology, economics, and education have led to recommendations emphasizing seven key soft skills for cross-cutting youth programming in workforce development, sexual and reproductive health, and peacebuilding around the world. These skills are positive self-concept, self-control, higher-order thinking skills, social skills, communication skills, empathy, and goal-orientation (Gates, et al, 2016).³

From the employer perspective, a range of studies and recommendations have also been published. The World Bank’s World Development Report for 2019 on the Changing Nature of Work⁴ suggests the key importance of the following skills for a changing global economy: problem-solving and critical thinking, perseverance/persistence, flexibility and adaptability, collaboration/teamwork, curiosity and creativity, empathy, and conflict resolution. The World Economic Forum’s 2018 Future of Jobs report⁵ similarly emphasizes increased demand for several

Figure 3: Cross-Sectoral Skills for Positive Youth Outcomes (Gates et al, 2016)



dimensions of higher-order thinking, including analytical thinking and innovation, active learning, creativity, originality, initiative, technology design and programming, critical thinking and analysis, complex problems-solving, reasoning and ideation, and systems analysis. Other soft skills expected to become increasingly dominant in the near future are leadership and social influence, and emotional intelligence.

A Middle East and North Africa regional report from regional job board Bayt.com “reveals what employers mean when they say job-seekers are not ‘employable.’”⁶ According to this study’s 5,345 online interviews with employers, the following is the level of employer demand for soft skills, with reference to mid-level and junior-level hires:

Table 1: MENA regional skills gaps study results from Bayt.com

Skill	% of respondents: “important”	% of respondents: “difficult to find”	Combined Score
Efficiency	81%	59%	70.00%
Ability to work under pressure	79%	58%	68.50%
Critical thinking and problem solving	75%	61%	68.00%
Collaboration/teamwork	80%	55%	67.50%
Creative thinking	73%	62%	67.50%
Adaptability/managing multiple priorities	76%	59%	67.50%
Communication	80%	53%	66.50%
Personality & demeanor	75%	55%	65.00%
Planning/organizational skills	70%	58%	64.00%
Negotiation	68%	56%	62.00%

These various recommendations for soft skill priorities have solid grounding, drawing on a wide review of academic research from the fields of psychology, economics, and education, or on direct employer surveys. Yet **global recommendations can also sometimes miss the mark of what matters most to particular groups of youth in particular contexts**—such as Algeria.

World Learning’s ⁷ youth employment projects in Algeria have directly reached nearly 20,000 Algerian youth in half a dozen years, and have operated in a context of high youth unemployment (29.1% in September 2018)⁸ and social unrest in several parts of the country, along with government fear that disaffected youth may be recruited for the purpose of political violence (Kouaouci, 2004).⁹ Building on staff knowledge of the

context, the organization’s original soft skills development training focused on building leadership and teamwork skills, communication skills, social skills, an understanding of personal strengths and interests, and several facets of functional job search skills tailored to Algeria’s context.



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Table 2: YEP Career Services

YEP Career Services	
Employability and Soft Skills Training Modules	Other Offerings
Leadership	Experiential learning methodology to build personal, social, and communication skills
Overcoming Obstacles	
Career Planning	
Resume/CV Writing	
Cover Letter Writing	Career counseling
Job Interviews	Career/Job Fairs
Job Search Planning	Technical trainings
Online Job Matching Platform (DZCareer.org)	

The current YEP soft skills training methodology is comprised of two courses (Part I and Part II), with a total of 7 modules and 15 contact hours. Part I covers the modules of Leadership, Overcoming Obstacles, and Career Planning, while Part II covers the modules of Resume Writing, Cover Letter Writing, Job Interviews, and Job Search Planning. Activities focused on soft skills development are integrated together within modules that also focus on functional job search skills, as well as integrated cross-cutting soft skills development through the curriculum's experiential learning methodology. The YEP soft skills training is offered through project-established career centers at nine technical and

vocational schools. Other YEP interventions and offerings include individual career counseling that uses data from individual computer-based psychometric assessments, career and job fairs, employer linkages for job matching and job placements, and some two-dozen short course technical training options.

In light of the recent proliferation of international research recommendations around soft skills development, YEP project staff have sought to re-evaluate the content of this soft skills training to maximize its effectiveness for youth. This required moving beyond existing regional and global research to gain a systematic understanding of Algerian youth perspectives—how these youth characterize the strengths and skills of those who are successful in finding employment, starting a business, or generally establishing a productive adult role for themselves in their contexts; how these youth describe the skills they have used in their personal experiences of searching for work, and any weaknesses that have held them back; and what these youth identify as most and least beneficial from their education and training experiences, including courses specifically intended to build core soft skills. Beyond the consideration of individual skills and personal effort, project staff also sought to understand youth perspectives on any contextual factors that were affecting their search for work.

Ultimately the goal is to create a refined approach to teaching soft skills development alongside functional job search skills, in a manner that responds directly to the reality faced by youth in Algeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this purpose, YEP researchers implemented individual questionnaires and conducted focus group discussions at six project sites—in the provinces of Adrar, Biskra, Blida, El Oued, Oran, and Setif (see map on next page). Respondents were randomly chosen¹⁰ from the project's database of beneficiaries from each site through a two-stage cluster sampling technique focusing on obtaining the perspectives of four beneficiary population subsets:

- I. Female YEP alumni who were successful in obtaining employment within 6 months
- II. Female YEP alumni who were unsuccessful in obtaining employment (with a mixture of those who searched for employment and those who did not try to search)
- III. Male YEP alumni who were successful in obtaining employment within 6 months

IV. Male YEP alumni who were unsuccessful in obtaining employment (with a mixture of those who searched for employment and those who did not try to search)

For the purpose of this study, **“employment”** was defined as internships, part-time, or full-time paid jobs obtained through a graduate’s own efforts, or income-generating self-employment or business activities, but not direct job placements organized by the career centers, since our interest was in the personal search process.

Researchers followed an over-sampling strategy to mitigate the effects of likely non-attendance and attain a final sample of at least 20 participants per population subgroup. As the table below shows, the eventual respondent sample size included a slight under-representation of employed males and over-representation of unemployed females; however, the representation of each group was still considered adequate for obtaining the desired research insights. In total, 90 young men and young women gave their full informed consent¹¹ to participate in the research.¹²

Figure 4: Map of Algeria's Wilaya (Provinces)



Table 3: Qualitative research participants

Sex	Status	Indiv #	% Sample	Age Range	Avg Age
Male	Employed	17	18.7%	22-32	25.9
	Unemployed	21	23.1%	21-34	25.7
Female	Employed	22	24.2%	21-31	25.1
	Unemployed	31	34.1%	18-33	25.1

When attending their scheduled focus group discussion, participants first spent approximately 15-30 minutes completing an individual questionnaire, followed by approximately 60-75 minutes participating in the focus group discussion that covered similar questions, for a total of 90 minutes. This paired research methodology was employed both to give participants greater chance to reflect on the questions ahead of the focus group discussion, and to enable analysis of individual-level responses on certain questions where more private concerns may not have been voiced in the focus group discussions. The individual questionnaire and the focus group discussion protocol are included as annexes to this report.

As a qualitative study, this sampling strategy and methodology are focused on gaining deeper understanding into a range of different beneficiary viewpoints. The focus was not on generating a statistically representative picture of the larger population, but rather on understanding in greater detail how participants describe their own experiences, and on detecting patterns in those perspectives. The author used the qualitative research analysis software Atlas.TI to code the text of participants’ responses, conducting multiple rounds of refinement to analyze frequencies, patterns, and networks. This inductive process helps to yield categories and types that can later be confirmed through larger-scale quantitative and statistical analyses.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This research identifies 9 priority soft skills that youth themselves have found to be crucial for young people to both seek out and succeed in finding employment in the Algerian context. When matched with the labor market analysis research already conducted with Algerian employers by Youth Employment Project staff, the research points to a number of overlapping soft skills needs, as well as several additional employer-prioritized skills gaps—for a total of 18 priority soft skills and functional skills for youth employment in the Algerian context (see Table 4).

While some of these skills map onto the recommendations made in the international research literature, others highlight less-often prioritized skills. And while this research suggests that several of these skills are already being built through the existing Youth Employment Project soft skills curriculum, there is also a set of new skills identified that were not previously emphasized in the project's core soft skills approach. To ensure that Algerian youth benefit from the results of this research, the Youth Employment Project is now creating a revised core employability soft skills curriculum soon to be offered through the project's network of career centers and its new collaborative structure, the Algerian career center federation Techghil.

Table 4: 18 Priority Skills Needs for Youth Employment in Algeria

Youth-identified employability soft skills needs in Algeria	Is this skill already being built by YEP?
1. Positive self-concept and self-confidence	Strong evidence
2. Self-motivation and initiative	Moderate evidence
3. Goal-setting	Moderate evidence
4. Social skills, including networking and customer service	Strong evidence
5. Communication skills	Strong evidence
6. Perseverance and grit	New focus
7. Adaptability and flexibility	New focus
8. Managing emotions (self-control)	New focus
9. Planning and time management	New focus
Additional Employer-identified soft skills needs in Algeria	
10. Conscientiousness (hardworking and dependable)	New focus
11. Problem-solving (higher-order thinking)	New focus
12. Professionalism (self-presentation and etiquette)	Moderate evidence
Functional Employability Skills Needs	
13. Language skills (French, English)	New focus
14. IT/Software skills	New focus
15. Career planning	Moderate evidence
16. Job search strategies	Moderate evidence
17. CVs and online profiles	Strong evidence
18. Job interviews	Strong evidence

This report is organized according to three primary research questions shaping the investigation:

- I. To gain insight into the youth population and the motivations that shape their interactions with employment programming, we ask: Why do youth join the YEP career centers?

- II. To identify priorities for future programming, we ask: What skills do youth most need to gain employment in the Algerian context?
- III. And to determine the degree of effectiveness of the current career centers approach, we ask: How do the Youth Employment Project career centers currently help youth build soft skills and functional job search skills?

The report concludes with a series of recommendations to refine the trainings and other interventions offered by career centers around the country, as well as discussing the balance youth education and training initiatives need to strike in adopting global research findings on priority soft skills, while at the same time taking seriously the context-specific needs and experiences of particular youth populations.

I. WHY DO YOUTH JOIN THE YEP CAREER CENTERS?

Young participants in the Youth Employment Project (YEP) overwhelmingly joined the project out of a desire to improve their skills and employment prospects. Overall, most¹ participants in this research explained that they sought YEP services because they wanted to learn new technical skills, followed by over half who also wanted to learn about soft skills, and/or who thought the project could help them to find a job. Roughly a third were also interested in career counseling, and a quarter were interested in obtaining a certificate. Relatively few selected the passive reasons included in the questionnaire, such as “my friends told me to do it”, “my parents told me to do it”, or “I was bored, and it was something to do.” In general, therefore, we can see that youth understood and believed that the YEP career centers could help them obtain new or improved employment, including through skills development.

Nearly half of the YEP participants in this sample had some kind of prior work experience before joining YEP; however, the majority of these experiences were in underpaid, underemployed, or unstable positions. Approximately half of the male respondents who had prior work experience were in unpaid roles, while others had earned salaries ranging from 12,000-80,000 dinars per month (US\$101 to \$675). Titles included secretary, sales manager, security agent, cook, waiter, intern, and lab assistant. Over half of the females who had prior work experience were unpaid, while others had salaries ranging from a small hourly wage of 300 dinars (\$2.53), up to 15,000-70,000 dinars per month (US\$126-\$590). Titles included trainer, teacher and substitute teacher, lab assistant, tutor, HR assistant, intern, secretary, accountant, and salesperson. The individual questionnaire data on pre- and post-training employment status and positions also confirm that these youth—despite their prior work experience—were in unstable job positions, or were unemployed at the time they joined YEP, as none of them retained the same employment following their participation in YEP.

Top reasons youth cite for joining YEP

- Learn a new technical skill
- Learn about soft skills
- Get help finding a job

Reasons for joining YEP services differed somewhat by gender and by prior work experience. Both males and females with prior work experience prioritized learning a new technical skill and learning soft skills, over all other reasons—suggesting that they were aiming for career advancement towards more stable, higher-paid, or more satisfying work. Women without prior work experience prioritized getting assistance in finding a job and learning a new technical skill. Men without prior work experience prioritized getting assistance in finding a job, followed by learning a new technical skill and learning about soft skills. External or non-goal-oriented motivations, such as boredom or friends’ recommendations, were not strongly prevalent in any group.

¹ Note that specific statistics are deliberately not provided in this report, since this is qualitative research that was not designed to yield representative statistics that could be generalized to the larger population of beneficiaries. Nonetheless, the general patterns and trends discovered here (such as factors that are emphasized more than or less than others) are likely to carry through to the broader population.

II. WHAT SKILLS DO YOUTH NEED TO GAIN EMPLOYMENT IN ALGERIA?

The core research question addressed by this investigation is the determination of which skills youth most need in order to gain employment in Algeria. The research investigated this question from several dimensions, asking youth to discuss the difficulties they face when searching for work, including both personal weaknesses and external factors, asking youth to theorize around the differences between employed and unemployed youth, and analyzing previously gathered information from Algerian employers on youth skills gaps. This section of the report describes the findings from this set of explorations.

DIFFICULTIES YOUTH FACE WHEN SEARCHING FOR WORK

Young male and female respondents for this research described their job search processes in ways that showed their understanding of a variety of available methods—some of which they learned for the first time through their interactions with the YEP career centers. Both men and women mentioned writing or correcting their CV, using their networks of connections, creating online profiles and applying on platforms like LinkedIn and local online job boards, visiting companies in person and talking to a manager or HR representative, sending their CV to many companies, working through the National Employment Agency (*Agence Nationale de l'Emploi*, or ANEM), volunteering until they were offered a job, and using their networks and connections, especially friends. Only a few respondents left this question blank, implying that they did not try to search.

Despite this general knowledge of job search strategies, many youth still had significant difficulties in finding work—including the half of the research sample who were still unemployed. To gain greater insight into these issues, this research therefore examined individual and focus group discussion data from male and female respondents separately regarding the difficulties that Algerian youth face when searching for work, deliberately focusing both on personal weaknesses and on negative external factors affecting the search for employment.

EXTERNAL FACTORS HINDERING THE JOB SEARCH

Research participants of both sexes, both employed and unemployed, cited a similar range of external factors that had hindered their job search; however, there were certain gender-related distinctions.

Both employed and unemployed young women listed the same essential set of external factors that negatively affect the job search in Algeria. This set included lack of experience—with women stating that institutes and universities do not provide practical experience or internships and so young graduates are not attractive to employers; and lack of job openings in general, in one's specific field, or in one's field and place of residence. One young woman

Major external factors hindering the job search

- Lack of practice and work experience
- Few job openings in certain fields
- Residency regulations, distance to jobs
- Delays due to ANEM procedures
- Nepotism and favoritism
- Low pay

Men: Military service, gender discrimination

Women: Gender discrimination, lack of family support for career goals

explained, “Lack of experience can be a big obstacle. Employers require so much experience. It’s quite difficult when you just graduated to kick off your career. It’s a very frustrating experience. They also require very specific diplomas for certain job positions. I applied for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and they didn’t accept the educational background that I had. This has taken me outside my field.” Another described her situation: “The field or the major one is specialized in isn’t recruiting. As a political science graduate, I don’t find anywhere I can work within my area of expertise. The thing is it wasn’t even my choice to study political science. I originally wanted to study sociology. It all goes back to how when you pass your baccalaureate exam; you are placed in majors based on your grade and no other things are taken into consideration such as your preferences. It’s a whole educational/employment system that’s chaotic.”

Women also mentioned the difficulty of isolation and distance between available jobs and the location of their residence; nepotism; and the sense that the intermediary role played by ANEM between job-seeker and employer often slowed the job search rather than facilitating it. “ANEM is sometimes hindering to the process of recruitment,” one young woman explained. “They have too many laws about recruitment. They told me I must have someone recommend me or sign an authorization to obtain a certain job. ANEM seems to be more helpful towards employers rather than job-seekers.”

Respondents had a keen sense of injustice about the low wages usually available to them and the various employment practices they perceived as unfair. One woman explained, “Employers offer extremely low salaries to youth with no experience. You’d work for many hours for what? 12000 DA? [US\$101/month] Maybe women might accept that, but a man would never settle for that little. This is maybe one of the reasons why so many people illegally immigrate.” Another remarked, “[There is a] tendency of employers only wanting to recruit fresh graduates for unpaid internships and then replacing them with other unpaid interns.”

Finally, young women also mentioned the factor of industries that discriminate against women—hiring women only if they are pretty, not hiring women in certain fields, or not hiring a woman who wears the veil for certain positions (such as salesperson). “Certain industries discriminate against women,” one female respondent stated. “Even if you want to work as a sales person in a shop here in El Oued, they would rather have males.” Finally, many mentioned parents’ or family’s lack of support for the career goals of young women. The same respondent continued, “The private sector is frowned upon for women. I wanted to work for an automotive company, but my parents refused.”

Interestingly, at least some young men also mentioned gender discrimination—this time in favor of women, as they were perceived to be willing to work for less. One respondent explained, “Nepotism is on the top of the list. If you don’t know someone important, you’ll have much of a harder time. I also think that recruiters prefer women. I went once for a job interview in this company where they were looking for an architect. The recruiter blatantly told me that they [would] rather hire a woman to sit in the office. I think that’s the case because women accept to be paid less.” Another mentioned lack of family support for male career choices or the distance to work, although this was not as prevalent an issue for men as for women: “Family can come in the way in one’s career. Sometimes, they don’t want you to do certain jobs or go work far from them.”

Both employed and unemployed young men also talked about a similar range of issues: nepotism and people hiring someone they already know, especially in the public sector; the need for men to complete compulsory military service (which is signified by possessing a yellow card, “*la carte jaune*”); and the general lack of job opportunities. “In the public sector as well as in private sector, nepotism is everywhere,” one young man remarked. “It has to do with trust. People rather recruit people they trust.

La carte jaune as well is an obstacle. I believe recruiters need it in order to insure you. They even require it if you are doing an internship.” Another explained that the biggest obstacle was “[the] military obligation for young men. I didn’t have *la carte jaune* for the longest time, which got me even scared to apply for a job. What if I start a job and then I get called to serve?”

Young men also mentioned government policy and institution-related issues, including lack of responsiveness from ANEM, ANEM’s requirements for local residence, and an over-reliance on the government’s subsidized employment program for youth, the *Contrat de Travail Assisté* (CTA). “Employers sometimes discriminate against you for not being from the *wilaya* or for not being from certain parts of that *wilaya*. This could be due to discrimination but that could also be an ANEM authorization issue. Some *wilayas* require a signature from the *Wali* [governor] in order to acquire residency.” Another recounted, “I had employers wanting to hire me in order to take advantage my diploma of civil engineering to get their business going and in exchange they would hire me as receptionist or assistant. I naturally refused because they would only offer me a CTA.”

Finally, several young men mentioned that disorganized and inadequate recruiting methods, as well as lack of transparency, do not give candidates a fair chance. “Most recruiters don’t have a methodology of recruitment. You don’t go through interviews and the type of process that gives you a fair chance to get hired.” Another young man remarked, “I found many job opportunities on the internet that don’t give full information about the position. They are very vague. It’s not really professional.”

One man and one woman also mentioned chronic health issues that impacted their job search, indicating that this is another obstacle YEP trainings may need to prepare youth to confront and manage.

PERSONAL WEAKNESSES HINDERING THE JOB SEARCH

Both the individual questionnaires and the focus group discussions asked participants to reflect on personal weaknesses that had negatively impacted their job search. In response, research participants mentioned both soft skills and functional job search skills they felt they were lacking.

Table 5: Soft skills gaps reported by youth

Soft Skills-Related Areas of Weakness	Degree of Weakness
Communication skills	Widespread
Social skills (including networking)	Widespread
Positive self-concept, self-confidence	Widespread
Managing emotions, stress management	Widespread-primarily female
Self-motivation, initiative, autonomy	Moderate
Planning, time management, efficiency	Moderate-primarily female

Overall, the **soft skills** that seemed to pose the greatest challenge to these youth in negatively impacting their job search were: communication skills, social skills (including networking), positive self-concept and self-confidence, managing stress, self-motivation and initiative, and planning and time management. While both men and women mentioned each of these, weaknesses in stress

management and time management were more frequently mentioned by women than men. Other soft skills weaknesses mentioned by fewer participants included adaptability and flexibility, persuasiveness and negotiation, goal-setting, persistence and determination, assertiveness, problem-solving, and optimism or overcoming negative thoughts.

The weakest skills across the board, for both men and women, were communication skills, social skills—including the ability to network and build relationships with contacts—and positive self-concept or self-

confidence. Often these soft skills were strongly intertwined in participants' comments. One young man commented, for example, "I lack confidence. I doubt myself a lot. It makes me look like I am too reserved and that I don't like talking to people. I wish I had better communication skills."

Regarding communication skills specifically, comments touched on both speaking skills and self-presentation or body language: "I lack communication skills and how to present myself more properly. I have so much to learn," said one young man. And a young woman explained, "I lack communication skills. It makes my search much more difficult. People that express themselves better seem to have it easier." Another young woman commented, "I was shy. I didn't know how to respond in job interviews. I have communication problems. I am not able to share clearly my point of views."

Social skills were important to participants in terms of working with others, but especially due to the need to build a network of relationships that could help them learn more about available jobs and opportunities. A young woman remarked, "I am not very social. When I was in university I would go from home to university and from university back home without interacting with anyone or going anywhere. Now, I am not very good at dealing with people and I don't know where to go search for jobs." A young man commented, "I lack networking skills. I am not very social. I think it's a necessary skill to have in the job search." And another explained, "I used to be terrible in group work. I had to learn to work with others. I lacked patience. I think I am doing better at that now."

Both men and women also discussed their lack of self-confidence, also referred to as "positive self-concept" or "realistic self-esteem" in the soft skills literature (Gates, et al, 2016).¹³ A young man told the story of one of his job interviews, "I was once asked if I knew how to maneuver a certain software and I said with hesitation that I'm ok at it. I was then tested on that and it turns out I was better than ok. The recruiter told me that speaking about my skills with such low confidence would jeopardize my chances." Young women spoke about "shyness", "lack of self-confidence", and "self-doubt". Many described these as former weaknesses that have begun to change through their interactions with the career development center (CDC): "I had extreme lack of confidence. It's better now as compared with before joining the CDC. However, it's still there. I feel I am not enough for certain positions sometimes and that I can't do certain jobs."

Another challenge faced by both men and women, though reported to a slightly less widespread degree, was self-motivation and initiative. "At some point, I lacked motivation and gave up too easily," a young man remarked. "I am too passive," reflected a young woman. "If I don't receive a call from employers, I wouldn't proactively try to find something."

Interestingly, there were two soft skills weaknesses mentioned significantly more frequently by young women than by young men: managing stress, and time management or planning. A few young men and several young women talked about stress in relation to the job search process itself, and difficult communication situations such as interviews. "I have a hard time managing my stress during interviews," one young woman stated. "I would be ready and all, but my stress makes me forget everything I was about to say." Young women also talked about stress in relation to managing their many responsibilities—again, connected back to time management. "I also lack time management skills. I pressure myself a lot with work and end up having so much more stress that I can handle," said one young woman. Another pointed out her weakness as "time management, I was not really able to prioritize my daily tasks."

Many youth also mentioned **functional employability skills** they struggle with, including languages (primarily French, also English); specific technical and vocational skills, almost universally related to IT and software; and the need to gain practical experience applying the theories they had learned in school. They

also mentioned challenges with job interviews, understanding the job search process, CV writing, and career planning. The need for improved skills in career planning was mentioned only by young women.

Table 6: Functional skills gaps reported by youth

Functional Skills-Related Areas of Weakness	Degree of Weakness
Languages (English, French)	Widespread
IT/software skills	Widespread
Practical Experience	Widespread
Job interviews	Widespread
Job search process	Moderate
CV writing	Moderate
Career planning	Moderate

Regarding language skills, both young women and young men signaled their need to improve in French or English, and sometimes in both languages, in order to perform better during their employment search. “French and English have been an obstacle,” one man remarked. “For example, I went in to this job interview and the interviewer asked questions that used very complex terms in French. It would open doors for me if I were to speak better French. Many institutions require it.” A young woman remarked, “French and

English are required by many employers. It’s not my strength. I understand a little, but I can’t speak that well.” For some research participants, Algeria’s history of conflict with France seems to have led to an aversion to French in particular, despite its importance for many jobs. “I hate French so much that I can’t really study it or learn it properly,” explained one young woman.

Both young men and young women signaled the need to learn certain computer or software skills in order to gain better access to employment in their fields. One young woman explained, “As an accountant I need to be able to use certain software—BC Compta—more efficiently. I unfortunately don’t.” Some youth indicated that they had come to a YEP career center specifically to fill in those gaps in their skills, such as one young man who explained, “My weaknesses in computer skills are the reason I took the training I took in the CDC. That’s why I registered for the IT training.” Other specific IT skills needs the respondents mentioned included basic computer skills, Excel, Cisco networks, electrical engineering software, and SPSS.

Several young people mentioned their lack of practical experience as a personal weakness—in addition to discussing it during the question on external factors reviewed previously. One young woman remarked, for example, “I think most of the time I understand theories, but I am not that practical. I lack administrative skills that are needed on the ground. Employers prefer people that can work right away rather than having to train them. It would be nice if we did an internship after the trainings we did here at the CDC. It’d help us develop more practical skills.” While all YEP career centers work to connect participants directly to internships and job postings, such arrangements are often difficult to achieve—in part due to ANEM’s official role as the legally mandated intermediary between job-seekers and employers.

Both men and women also talked about their struggles with understanding the job search process, preparing for job interviews, and preparing a quality CV that was customized to the job opportunity—and often, how the career center’s courses helped them to overcome these weaknesses. “I went on many interviews where I didn’t know how to act or what to say. It could have compromised some of my chances,” explained one young woman. A young man remarked, “Yes, I had a problem with job interviews with employers. After joining the CDC, I improved a lot.” Similarly, a young man mentioned “Yes, I had a problem with creating a proper CV. however, thanks to my experience at the CDC, I learned so much,” and a young woman stated, “I wasn’t very good at CV writing. but thanks to the training, I’ve learned to do it much better.” Both young men and young women talked about needing help with the basic steps of a job search process. “I struggled mostly at the beginning of my job search,” a woman explained. “I was

confused on how to start and what are the steps in the job search journey. The CDC helped me so much on these points.”

The one functional job search skill that showed a gender difference was that of career planning. A number of young women specifically identified this as a personal weakness, while no young men mentioned it. “I was lost and did not know what to do after my studies, I had no objectives in my career before taking soft skills training,” stated one woman. “I struggled with setting objectives and I was always under pressure to choose my career. Even if I got two or three opportunities, I do not know how to choose and wanted all things. I did not have professional maturity.” Another stated, “I was very confused. I searched randomly for any type of job without caring about the quality of the job as in: ‘is it going to help me develop or not?’” While respondents’ comments did not explicitly give reasons for this difference between young men and young women’s clarity around their career goals, it is possible that in a culture where men are overwhelmingly expected to be the primary breadwinners, young men regularly receive more informal and formal career guidance from their families and within school as they grow up, as compared to young women.

Overall, the individual questionnaires and focus group discussions point to both young men and young women feeling the need to further develop a core set of soft skills and fundtional job search skills—communication, social skills, positive self-concept, self-motivation and initiative, language skills, IT/software skills, the job search process, and skills for preparing for interviews and developing a targeted CV. Young women also particularly signaled the need for support with stress management, time management, and career planning.

YOUTH THEORIES ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

This focus group discussion protocol also asked youth themselves to theorize around the differences between employed and unemployed youth, as they tried to explain why some of their peers were able to find work while others were not.

Table 7: Skills youth associate with the ability to find work in Algeria

Skills Youth Associate with the Ability to Find Work in Algeria	Degree of Evidence
Self-motivation and initiative	Strong
Perseverance and grit	Strong
Adaptability and flexibility	Strong
Positive self-concept/self-knowledge	Strong
Having a career plan	Strong
Preparing an effective CV	Strong
Communication skills	Moderate
Goal-setting	Moderate
Having a learning orientation	Moderate
Social skills and networking	Moderate
Planning and time management	Moderate
Job interview skills	Moderate
Using the internet to search for jobs	Moderate

The most frequently-mentioned skill differences between employed and unemployed youth, identified by these youth themselves, were (from most to least number of mentions): level of self-motivation and initiative; perseverance and determination or grit; adaptability and flexibility—related in part to willingness to take on a low-wage or lower-level job to gain experience, as well as flexibility on the field and type of work; and positive self-concept coupled with knowledge of one’s own strengths and weaknesses. They also frequently mentioned the functional job search skills of having a career plan

and matching it to one’s skills; and preparing one’s CV well. Each of these six skills was spontaneously

mentioned by a relatively large number of respondents, suggesting that these are highly prevalent theories youth hold about the causes behind their own or their peers' struggles to find employment.

Other soft skills mentioned as determinative of who gets jobs and who does not, although by fewer participants, included communication skills, goal-setting, having a learning and growth orientation, social skills and networking to build relationships, and time management or planning. Additional functional job-search skills mentioned included job interview skills, and knowing how to build an online profile and use the internet to search for jobs.

There were some differences between the major groups of respondents in this research. Employed young women stated that young men are the least likely to accept taking on a lower-wage or lower-level position to gain experience, and are also less self-motivated. Unemployed young men and women were more likely than those who were employed to cite external factors like nepotism and lack of availability of jobs in their field as the obstacle, although some employed men and women also acknowledged the problem of nepotism. Interestingly, as the preceding discussion illustrated, while many youth brought up external factors such as nepotism and military service, nearly all of them also mentioned personal weaknesses as significant constraints as well, suggesting that most youth believe their chances could improve with further skill development even if external conditions do not change.



**MOST YOUTH BELIEVE THEIR CHANCES
COULD IMPROVE WITH FURTHER SKILL
DEVELOPMENT EVEN IF EXTERNAL
CONDITIONS DO NOT CHANGE.**

The below table offers example discussions from the four different types of focus groups, when participants were asked to explain how they as employed youth were different from those who were unemployed, and vice versa.

Algerian Youth Theories on Why Some Get Work and Others Do Not: Focus Group Discussions	
Employed Male Respondents: Setif	Employed Female Respondents El Oued
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It all comes down to persistence. You have to be proactive during the search, you have to be aware of the job openings. Otherwise, there is no way it's going to work. • You have to be patient too. It's not an easy process and it doesn't happen overnight. • Some people have a plan and others don't during their job search. I feel like those who haven't found a job for a while is because they gave up too easily. You can't give up quickly. But then there are other obstacles that you can't really control mainly <i>la carte jaune</i>. Many people would find a job but cannot really commit because of it. They don't know when they will get called to serve. Perseverance is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of proactiveness of the job-seeker. How often are you applying? How much time are you spending looking for a job? How much time are you spending perfecting your CV? Adding to the frequency, there is the technique. Some people are more precise about where they apply and therefore manage their effort more efficiently. • If you take up small jobs and internships in the field that you want to work on, it helps tremendously. Employers perceive you as more serious about the job. • Some job-seekers might do all that but still have very few job opportunities in their field. It's not all in one's control.

and all, but sometimes even that is not enough if you lack the skills needed in the particular field that you are pursuing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes it's not the job-seekers that aren't serious, it's the employer. They would put up announcements that they are hiring and when you show up, they tell you they are not. Maybe they hired someone they know or something like that. But it'd be better to let us know.
Unemployed Male Respondents: Biskra	Unemployed Female Respondents: Blida
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance plays a big role in finally getting hired, in my opinion. Some people give up too easily. • The type of diploma you have. Some fields barely have any opportunities compared to others. I think many of job-seekers that actually found jobs relatively easily have some sort of nepotism playing in their favor. • Lack of experience can make you lack self-confidence. This can affect how often you go for or apply for job opportunities that you might have a chance for. You just miss them because you think you are not competent for it. • Some employers take advantage of your lack of experience to give you very low salaries. I, myself, was offered a CTA.¹⁴ I refused that offer because it pays really low. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It depends on the level of motivation of the person. If you are a motivated person, you won't stop looking. • It depends on the demand in the field. Some fields barely ever hire or hire very little graduates. Others hire more. • It can also depend on your level of availability. Some people have more engagements: they might be married, they might have to go through military service. It can also depend of the hours of work that are required from you. Some people require many, many hours for a little pay. • Also having your own vehicle can help a lot especially when you have a busy schedule, as in you start early and finish late. Having to take public transportation can be such an obstacle as they take too long.

Two skills that were strongly emphasized in this discussion, but which have not been emphasized previously in this report are perseverance and adaptability. A group of unemployed young women in El Oued had particularly strong recommendations for themselves and for their peers regarding these skills.

Explaining the importance of flexibility and realistic expectations, one young woman remarked, "Lots of employers hate it when youth with no experiences ask for higher salaries than what they're supposed to get. They do not like demanding people. You have to start somewhere. You can't ask for money from the beginning. You must prove yourself."

"It's about persistence," another replied. "It's all about not giving up. You have to go through every employer that's possibly recruiting. I try my best. I still go almost everyday deposit my CV and try to be as convincing as possible."

Another tied these two skills together, explaining: "Some people don't just wait to be given an opportunity, they create their own. They show their capacities and their motivation. I know too many people that give up too easily. But I also know people that didn't even pass their Bac exam but decided to find other ways other than university or traditional schooling to reach what they want to do. They can go for agriculture or open their business."

For these young women and many others in the research, the key to success for many employed youth amounted to four key qualities: self-motivation, persistence, adaptability, and self-confidence. "I decided to go volunteer at this factory," recounted one young man. "I went in everyday even though they weren't recruiting. I just helped around and filled in for any tasks they needed. They ended up hiring me because

of my persistence.” Paired with the social and communication skills needed to build a network and present themselves to potential employers, as well as having a clear career plan and goals, many youth believed they too would be able to overcome the significant obstacles still in the way of their employment search.

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES ON THE SOFT SKILLS YOUTH LACK

The YEP labor market analyses, conducted in each of the *wilayas* where the project has been implemented, also give an overview of soft skills gaps in Algeria from the employer perspective. Interviews with employers in each site suggest that employers strongly consider factors such as professional self-presentation in dress and speech, conscientiousness or being hardworking and dependable, communication skills including (but not limited to) proficiency in English and French, positive self-concept and self-confidence, time management and planning, self-motivation and initiative, having long-term career goals and the associated loyalty to a company, stress management, social skills and appropriate behavior with colleagues and customers, and problem-solving skills. They perceive many of these as lacking in the youth they interview, and particularly in those they choose not to hire.

“Give me someone with a brain and professional mindset and I can take care of the rest,” said Hamza Djelloul of AgroVert Systems in El Oued. He cited the need for recruits with “Time management, punctuality, and a professional conscience... people who work their 8 hours and try to advance our business. When they’re sitting in the café I’m losing money.” Other employers in El Oued cited the ability to work effectively in teams, having ambition and a strong work ethic, and the ability to learn effectively from more experienced employees.

Soft Skills Algerian Employers Seek	Mirrored in Youth comments
Communication skills, English and French	Yes
Positive self-concept and self-confidence	Yes
Planning and time management	Yes
Self-motivation and initiative	Yes
Stress management, managing emotions	Yes
Social skills, including customer service	Partially
Career plans, goal-setting, and loyalty	Partially
Conscientiousness (hardworking, dependable)	No
Problem-solving	No
Professional self-presentation	No

Some employers also noted that many young recruits lack appropriate professional conduct and work ethic. Fransabank’s Mohamed Khelifaoui in Oran cited one of his corporate clients, who recently paid €50,000 to upgrade his machines from manual to automatic operation, after realizing that his workers were taking such frequent and long cigarette breaks that they were causing major production delays and profit losses. Workers at all levels need orientation to the professional world, said real estate developer GIRYAD’s Malika Belabdelouahab, also in Oran: “There are lots of university graduates on the job market, but once they’re in the professional environment they don’t adapt well.”

“It’s not even possible to find competent assistants,” regional chamber of commerce president Mohamed Lazhar Korichi lamented in Ouargla, citing his difficulties in recruiting young people with the right organizational, interpersonal, English language, communication, and IT skills to occupy such a post. Also lacking in many cases, he continued, are ambition, discipline, professionalism, and a sense of how to present oneself—how to dress and to speak well. Ouargla Merchants’ Union head Salim Saci noted that customer service skills and a culture of client relations are also sorely needed across many sectors.

For Ahmed Benmansour, president of drilling firm Tassili in Ouargla, the university provides technically sufficient engineers, though they lack managerial competencies, such as how to manage teams and logistics. They also have no on-the-job experience in the real world, which unfortunately means that smart people start at low levels simply because they lack practical experience and training. He cited several essential but often lacking criteria for new recruits: capacity for planning, team management, resource management, time management, vision and initiative, business culture and philosophy, and basic IT skills.

“We are suffering from the workforce. Even if workers are available, they’re not efficient,” one company representative in Sétif stated. The result, he said, is fewer recruitment opportunities for young job-seekers: “We prefer to hire experienced profiles directly, rather than the freshly graduated youth.” One recruiter said that her company even prefers to hire foreign workers over local ones who, again, “are not efficient.”

“The young generation is not conscious,” another stated, of how to conduct themselves professionally, and lacks the proper “clothing and personal presentation.” Another employer representative in Setif said, “Youth present themselves at job interviews without any preparation and without even proper attire.” Ammar Seklouli, head of Setif regional business associates FCE and CACI, agreed: “We need people who know how to behave in a professional environment.” He added that today’s job-seekers “are reticent, don’t have enough information on the job market, and are poorly oriented.”

“In general, in Tizi Ouzou,” said Abdelaziz Djebbar, VP of human resources at the National Sanitation Office’s Tizi Ouzou branch, “there are lots of qualified young people, but they need help getting into the professional world and business world. In interviews they’re so timid. Maybe they have great skills but they don’t know how to present them.” Consequently, during orientation sessions for new recruits, his agency is obliged to deliver “lengthy, expensive” trainings to them in “behavior and interaction with colleagues, stress management, time management, etc.”

“It’s not about ‘*savoir-faire*’ [how to do], it’s about ‘*savoir-être*’ [how to be]. Youth can cite all the diplomas they want but if they don’t know how to present themselves they can’t go far,” said one employer in Blida. Others cite lack of motivation or initiative among job-seekers, or note that youth fail to see the value of stable, long-term work—and sometimes leave a job they have just started for a less secure one with a higher salary.

“New recruits, and especially the youth, really lack an understanding of how to behave with their employers, their direct supervisors and the teams with which they work,” said an employer representative in Adrar. “The young recruits are aggressive!”

Problem-solving skills also continue to be a crucial weakness. “We bring them in for training, but many don’t know how to analyze the problem of a broken machine,” said an employer representative in Batna. “They didn’t learn mechanical logic in their program, and can’t even read a mechanical diagram.”

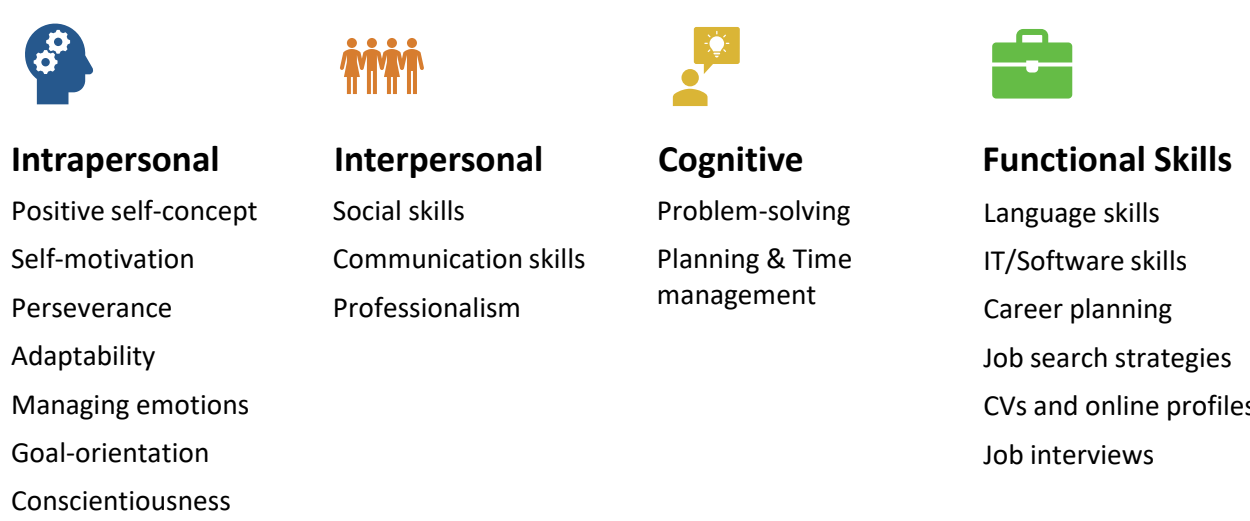
“The interpersonal skills and behavior are what we need, because we can do the rest,” said an employer in Biskra. Mounji Djouadi, a member of business association FCE’s youth wing in Biskra, concurred, “[The career center] needs to work on how to make the person apt and ready to work. It’s the personality that counts. As for a diploma, you can buy it—you just go to a school and you pay for it. But it’s how a young person manages their career, how they speak and express themselves and show their competencies, that counts.” More specifically, several business owners noted the importance of teaching youth how to plan their careers, so they will see the advantages of staying with a promising long-term post rather than leaving for quick, short-term gain. Others cited the need for seriousness, responsibility, punctuality, patience, and leadership skills.

Interestingly, many of these same skills needs are also recognized by youth in their comments, discussed previously. Youth and employers alike recognized the need for communication skills—including in English and French, positive self-concept or self-confidence, time management and planning, self-motivation and initiative, and stress management. Exceptions include employers’ interest in loyalty, as a facet of having longer-term career plans and goals, their addition of customer service skills as part of the social skillset employees need, and their concern with conscientiousness or a strong and dependable work ethic, problem-solving skills, and professional self-presentation.

CONCLUSION: PRIORITY SKILLS

Examining youth perspectives on their personal weaknesses and the differences they perceive between employed and unemployed youth, and analyzing these findings in light of Algerian employer perspectives and international research, yields a coherent set of 18 priority skills needs for Algerian youth to overcome the obstacles they face and gain employment. These skills include 12 soft skills in the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive domains, as well as 6 functional employability skills (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: 18 Skills Algerian Youth Need to Gain Employment



Soft skills do not have to be—and often cannot be—developed on their own. It makes most sense to develop them alongside more functional or concrete skills that youth know that they need. Practical activities that build those functional skills can be designed to teach about and promote soft skills development at the same time. For this to be effective, students need to know which soft skills are being emphasized in each lesson and why, understand the concept of each soft skill and be able to identify it in action, and have opportunities to practice it themselves—ideally repeatedly over a period of time.¹⁵

There is a variety of definitions available in the literature for the majority of the soft skills listed above. For purposes of clarity, the below table presents in alphabetical order a set of core definitions that can be used to advance curriculum development around each of these skills. These definitions draw primarily on a set of recent large-scale literature reviews that examined the research literature on soft skills from the fields of psychology, economics, and education.¹⁶

Soft Skills	Definition
Adaptability, flexibility	Adaptability, flexibility: Receptive to change, capacity to tolerate ambiguity, ability to adapt to the situation as it is. Includes an element of realism or realistic expectations.
Communication skills	“Communication skills include effective expression, transmission, understanding, and interpretation of knowledge and ideas.” (Lippman et al, 2015)
Conscientious, hardworking, dependable	Conscientious, hardworking, dependable is “the ability to “perform tasks with thoroughness and effort from start to finish where one can be counted on to follow through on commitments and responsibilities” (Lippman, Moore et al., 2013). In order to be hardworking and dependable, one must also possess other skills including integrity/ethics, self-motivation, and self-control. (Lippman et al, 2015)
Goal-orientation, goal-setting	Goal orientation is defined as the motivation and ability to make viable plans and take action toward desired goals (Lippman et al., 2014a). Goal orientation is closely tied with positive self-concept, since it relates to individuals’ beliefs about their abilities to accomplish specific goals. (Gates et al, 2016)
Managing emotions, Self-control	“Self-control refers to one’s ability to delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention, manage emotions, and regulate behaviors. Someone with a high proficiency in self-control is able to focus on tasks and manage his/her behavior despite distractions or incentives to do otherwise. Self-control is foundational to social skills, communication, being hardworking and dependable, teamwork, leadership, problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making.” (Lippman et al, 2015)
Perseverance, persistence, determination, grit	Perseverance is “continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition” (Merriam-Webster, standard definition). It is related to “grit”, which has been defined as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Duckworth, 2007).
Planning and Time management	Planning includes the “ability to form a plan, ability to work with a plan, planning with money, materials, and human resources, thrift, managing projects, efficiency, and time management.” Also, “The ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals.” (Lippman et al, 2015)
Positive self-concept	“Positive self-concept includes self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-awareness and beliefs, as well as self-esteem and a sense of well-being and pride. These skills are foundational to a healthy identity and awareness and deployment of one’s strengths in the workforce. The emphasis is placed here on self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, rather than self-esteem, which has been well-measured and studied, yet is mixed in its relationship to outcomes.” (Lippman et al, 2015)
Problem solving, part of	“Higher-order thinking consists of problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making, which have necessarily been combined here because the research literature reviewed often measured them together as one construct. Each of these skills may reflect the same underlying skill set of identifying an issue and taking in information

Higher-order thinking	from multiple sources to evaluate options in order to reach a reasonable conclusion (Stein, 2000).” (Lippman et al, 2015)
Professionalism	Professionalism is not typically recognized as a “soft skill” or trait in the psychology literature; however, it figures highly in many employer studies, where it is associated with terms such as “punctuality, knowing the importance of personal hygiene and appearance required by the employer, knowing how to change jobs in an appropriate/positive way, business etiquette, appearance and personality, poise, self-presentation” (Lippman et al, 2015). A useful resource from the management training company MindTools references the following professional attributes: a commitment to develop and improve one’s skills; competency and reliability; honesty and integrity; accountability for one’s actions and mistakes; self-regulation, calm demeanor, and maintaining separation from personal life and feelings; and professional dress, grooming, and etiquette. ¹⁷
Self-motivation and initiative	Self-motivation “describes the desire to do a task and achieve results, pursuing it with enthusiasm, determination, and autonomy. Self-motivation has an emotional component, including the desire to achieve something, but it also involves taking demonstrable action toward that accomplishment. It also has a cognitive component, that is, a focus on an intention and engagement in a task. The related skills of self-control, self-efficacy, and a learning or growth mindset, influence the development of self-motivation. If a youth believes that he or she is capable of achieving his or her goals or tasks, he or she becomes more motivated to accomplish them (Dweck, 2006).” (Lippman et al 2015)
Social skills	“ Social skills refer to a cluster of skills necessary to get along well with others. Social skills also include respecting others, using context appropriate behavior, and resolving conflict.” (Lippman et al, 2015). For the purposes of this research, “social skills” also includes teamwork, networking, and skills related to customer service.

World Learning proposes a reconceptualization of the core curricula to be offered by career centers in Algeria, to match the skills needs identified through this research (see figure below, Proposed Revised YEP Employability Skills Curriculum). The new courses would continue to build soft skills in an integrated manner with functional employability skills—but would add an expanded set of soft skills to be addressed more explicitly, as well as additional job search and entrepreneurial business creation skills. These courses will also be infused with World Learning’s core institutional values, seen as essential for creating a more just and peaceful world: intercultural understanding and empathy, community and civic engagement, social inclusion and justice, sustainability, and leadership.¹⁸

These soft skills, functional skills, and values can be joined together in an integrated way, as depicted in the following graphic outlining World Learning’s updated approach to employability skills development. This curriculum outline is itself a major product of the present research.

The following section of this document proceeds to examine what the YEP project and career centers are already doing to build the skills outlined above—as well as highlighting participants’ suggestions for refinement of the YEP model.

Proposed Revised YEP Employability Skills Curriculum

Cross-Cutting Soft Skills

Positive self-concept: self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-confidence, realistic self-esteem
Social Skills: respect and context-appropriate behavior, teamwork, conflict management, networking
Communication skills: writing, speaking, presenting, listening
Thinking Skills: information seeking, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, learning
Self-control and managing emotions: focus, control impulses, regulate behaviors, manage stress



Additional Soft Skills Introduced in Lessons	Self-motivation, initiative	Goal-setting	Perseverance, Resilience	Adaptability, Flexibility	Planning & Time Management	Conscientiousness /Hardworking	Professionalism	World Learning Values	Intercultural understanding & Empathy	Community & Civic engagement	Social inclusion & Justice	Sustainability	Leadership
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III. HOW DO THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECT CAREER SERVICES HELP?

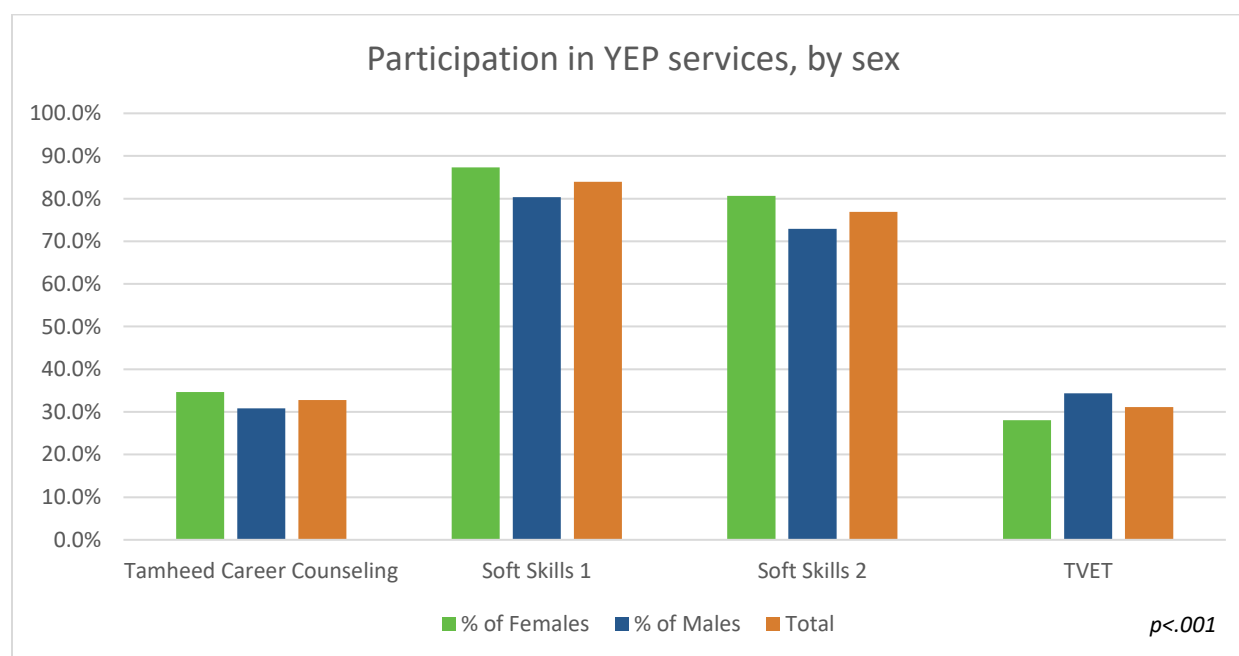
This research also gave participants an opportunity to comment in greater depth about the full range of services offered by the Youth Employment Project. These include seven employability and soft skills modules, divided into two parts, individual career counseling using Tamheed online resources and in-person meetings, two dozen technical and vocational training options, and career and job fairs (see table).

Table 8: YEP Career Services

YEP Career Services	
Employability and Soft Skills Training Modules	Other Offerings
I. Leadership	Experiential learning methodology to build personal, social, and communication skills
I. Overcoming Obstacles	
I. Career Planning	
II. Resume/CV Writing	Career counseling
II. Cover Letter Writing	
II. Job Interviews	Career/Job Fairs
II. Job Search Planning	Technical trainings

The September 2018 round of the biannual YEP tracer study surveys, which reached a sample of 3,027 alumni, showed that 32.8% of beneficiaries (34.6% of women, and 30.8% of men) took advantage of career advising; 83.9% of beneficiaries (87.3% of women and 80.4% of men) participated in Soft Skills 1, while 76.9% of beneficiaries (80.6% of women and 72.9% of men) participated in Soft Skills 2; and 31.1% of beneficiaries (28.1% of women and 34.3% of men) took advantage of technical and vocational (TVET) courses.

Figure 6: Participation in YEP Services

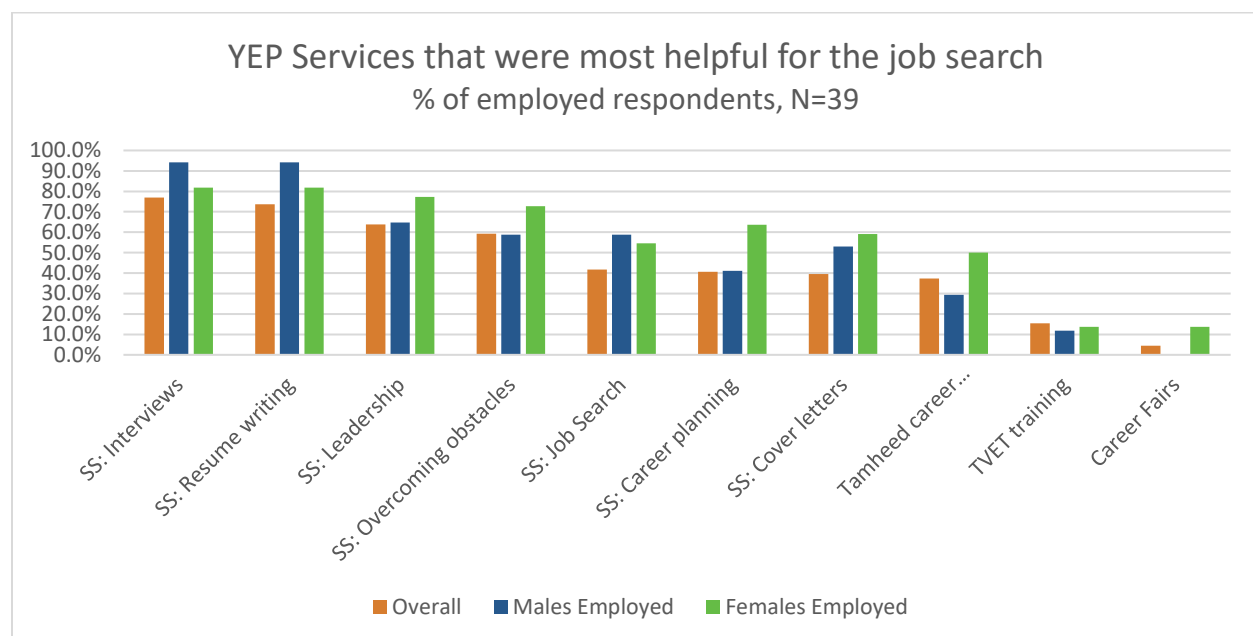


Of the overall 31.8% of YEP beneficiaries who took advantage of one of the TVET trainings, the most popular courses were Health & Safety / Environmental (HSE) which was offered at three levels with an overall participation of 5.2%, followed by Medical or Pharmacy Marketing (4.3%), First Aid and Fire Safety (3.8%), Secretarial/Administrative studies (3.0%), Accounting (2.6%), and Computer Networking (2.0%). Other offerings included carpentry, computing and Microsoft Office, electricity, e-marketing, engine driving, graphics design, human resources and payroll, information security, maintenance management, marketing, masonry, mobile app design, plumbing, sales techniques, teaching pedagogy, web design, welding and ironworks.

At the time of writing, YEP has reached over 9,000 youth through at least one of these soft skills trainings, technical trainings, or other services. Semi-annual career fairs, which attract tens of thousands of young job-seekers each year, are counted separately and not reflected in this figure.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON THE BENEFITS OF THE EMPLOYABILITY AND SOFT SKILLS COURSES

In their individual questionnaires, participants were asked to indicate whether any of these career center services were helpful for their job search, and separately, whether any were *not* very helpful for their job search. Overall, participants rated the soft skills modules on **job interviews, resumes/CVs, leadership, and overcoming obstacles as the most helpful for their post-training job search**. Men and women who found employment ranked the helpfulness of these services in roughly the same order as their unemployed peers. However, it is notable that women who found employment rated notably more highly the courses on leadership, overcoming obstacles, and career planning, as well as Tamheed career counseling, than did men who found employment—indicating that these courses may have particular significance for women’s search for jobs in the Algerian context.



Higher numbers of respondents indicated that cover letter writing and career planning courses, as well as individual career counseling, were not very helpful to them. Career fairs and technical training, which received few mentions for “helpfulness” on the previous question, were not specifically named as “unhelpful” either, leaving them in a relatively neutral position for most respondents.

Following is a selection of YEP beneficiary quotations regarding each of the soft skills modules, beginning with those rated as most helpful.

Job Interviews: “It was very intimidating for me to go on a job interview,” one young man stated. “We trained here at the CDC and simulated at home with a friend. The training made It made a huge difference at how I behave at those types of settings because I anticipated the problems and the tricky questions and was able to prepare myself to avoid them.” Another young man echoed, “Job interviews taught me so much about the discipline to have when dealing with employers and other people, how to keep eye contact and how not to fall into the traps that they might be setting you for in certain questions.”

Young women were equally appreciative of the job interview course. One stated, “I learned a lot from the job interview workshop as well. For example, I learned that when one is asked about their weaknesses, they’re supposed to add something positive about that part. For example, since my weakness is that I like to take time doing my job and don’t respect deadlines too well, I now mention in my job interviews the reason why I like taking my time is to produce something of great quality and detail-oriented.” Another young woman explained, “The job interview module taught me how to better answer tricky questions such as questions about my weaknesses. I learned how to answer that in a smarter way. It taught me about the power of body language, stress management and preparedness. I had one job interview before joining the CDC. It went terrible. I didn’t know how to answer most questions. It was a mess. The second job interview I had was one after I joined the CDC. It went much better. I was much more prepared and organized.”

Respondents did recommend, however, the need for more direct practice with someone familiar with the employer role. “I wish we could do job interview simulation with real companies. If we interacted with employers in such a setting, they would give us better feedback about what we are doing right and what we should be doing better.

Resume/CV Writing: “Interview and CV writing are the two workshops that I found most helpful,” one young woman stated. “When I came out of the CV writing workshops, I couldn’t believe the mistakes that I made in my old CV. I had a very empty and simplistic CV. It only had few lines of my previous trainings and education. So, after the workshop, I added many more items. I previously didn’t give importance to many things that employers may have found interesting about me. Now, it’s two pages long and contains more details about my experience and jobs I occupied. I kept adding as my experience was growing.”

A young man explained, “The workshop about job search, CV writing, and job interview were all helpful in my job search. For example, I had the same CV that I would send everywhere for different job positions at different companies. Now there is a big difference between my new CV and my old one. I am pickier about what goes in it. I mention all types of work that is relevant and am more precise about the dates and how to keep them in a chronological order.” Another commented, “CV writing was really helpful for me. I only heard about CVs briefly. I didn’t know how to make one myself. Prior to joining the CDC, I went to a cybercafé where they created one for me. It was pretty generic, it had generic format and generic information. My new CV now is entirely different. It has a much more personalized style.”

Leadership: A young man commented, “I think leadership was more helpful than others. It was amazing. We learned how to be a leader. It was beneficial in a way that it helped me understand different personalities better and deal with them the right way. It helped me push myself to do more things and take more initiative as I was a student in university and working at the same time. It made it look all possible to do.” Many other young men and women had similar reactions to the course. One young woman explained, “The leadership workshop was very helpful. It taught me that everyone can be a leader. I thought only certain people were leaders. It was incredible to see that we can all have different styles of leadership. It empowered me and taught me how to deal with people more efficiently. I look at people within a group much differently now. When I look at someone, I try to see their potential and how to use it to everyone’s advantage.”

Overcoming Obstacles: While comments about this course were less effusive, there were a number of respondents for whom it played an important role. “Overcoming obstacles taught me to take more chances and engage in bigger things,” one young man explained. “The module about how to overcome obstacles was extremely helpful,” a young woman also commented. “It taught me that there is always a way out and that fear should not be controlling your direction.”

It is likely that this module should be revised based on the research described in this report, to assist young people in dealing with the specific obstacles they are most likely to encounter in their own context, such as gender discrimination, distance and transport concerns, regulatory issues, lack of family support, and for some, health and disability issues.

Job Search Strategies: This course appears to have been most helpful for those who were not as familiar with the availability of online tools to assist with the job search process—several women and some men as well. “It introduced me to the practical part of the job search,” one young woman mentioned, “such as how to create a good LinkedIn account and how to plan the steps to your job search journey.” Another recalled, “When I graduated from university, I applied randomly to many companies but wasn’t getting any response. I didn’t know how to narrow down the options. After my training (Job Search), however, I learned how to apply more efficiently. There are jobs out there, it’s about how to look better for them.” A young man remarked, “Job Search [was helpful]. Through using Facebook as a tool to search for a job, I found the opportunity online.”

Career Planning: Again, more women than men mentioned benefitting from this course. One young woman explained, for example, “I learned how to draw my career path and how to overcome the ‘Experience’ obstacle that all job-seekers fear through volunteering and joining associations.”

Cover Letter Writing: This workshop drew mixed reviews. Many said they greatly appreciated it, since it was the first time they had heard of this tool in the job search process. A young woman remarked, “I had no idea what a cover letter was before that. I didn’t know we had to write one at all.” A young man commented, “It taught me how to mention my weaknesses in a more positive light. I learnt how to use cover letters in a more effective way and how to show my personality through it. I definitely have used what I learned to apply for the jobs I want.” Another explained, “CV writing, Cover Letter Writing and Overcoming Obstacles helped me lot to get a job. These workshops had big impact on my job search strategy. I told you that I did not have confidence in my skills, but I learned how to overcome this.”

Others, however, suggested that cover letters are not expected by employers in Algeria. “The cover letter workshop doesn’t really apply in Algeria,” said one young man. “Employers don’t even read those. So it doesn’t matter so much.”

Overall, we can see that there is a range of participant experiences with respect to each of the YEP soft skills courses—from those who found them helpful to those who did not; from those who had never encountered the ideas before, to those who were already very familiar with them. These qualitative findings also suggest that certain soft skills modules had the greatest impact on participants, namely: Job Interviews, CV, and Leadership. The Overcoming Obstacles course also had a strongly positive impact on some participants, although a smaller number. Many participants found the Cover Letter course helpful and a skill they had never come into contact with before, while others argued that it was not essential in the Algerian context. The weakest courses, according to this analysis, appear to be the Career Planning and Job Search modules—further investigation is needed into how these modules can be adapted and/or improved.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON CAREER COUNSELING, CAREER FAIRS, AND TVET TRAINING

Participants also offered feedback on three other aspects of YEP’s career services: Tamheed career counseling, career fairs, and TVET trainings.

The **Tamheed career counseling** service offered through YEP, created by and offered through a partnership with Silatech,¹⁹ consists of an online psychometric assessment that is based on the Big Five Personality Traits model (also known as the five-factor model, FFM); a report generated for a career counselor summarizing personality traits, interests, and potential career matches; and an in-person counseling session offered through YEP career centers. This experience appeared to greatly help many participants develop positive self-concept and self-knowledge, as well as a more adaptable attitude regarding employment choices. “Tamheed opened my mind to many fields,” explained one young man. “It taught me to go for many other options. The more you learn and experiment with new things, the better it gets. The more you learn, the more you feel confident in your job search. I was a bit limited in my thoughts. I only wanted to do accounting but now I am open to get trainings in other fields.”

A young woman explained, “Through Tamheed, I discovered my passion towards fashion and design although I had a marketing background. But marketing is everywhere, and I know now that I can find a way to do both. There is marketing involved in fashion too. I don’t have to choose one or another.” Another young woman remarked, “Tamheed opened my eyes on what it is that I am good at. It also highlighted my weaknesses, so I could work on them and improve those areas. It oriented me towards my career and what it is that I needed to train on in order to reach that job position.”

Nonetheless, the career counseling process also frustrated some participants who felt that they needed this guidance at a much earlier age to make better initial decisions about their studies. “Tamheed should be a service for younger people. Students in high school and middle school need it more. At this stage, it’s too late to have career counseling. The whole educational system/employment system is spoiled from high school. We need to give that type of counseling for those that still have decisions to make,” explained one young man. Advocacy for earlier stage career advising is one area that future youth employment projects in Algeria may focus on.

Regarding the **YEP Career Fairs**, each of the nine technical and vocational institutes involved in the program has organized a series of large-scale events with local employers, on an annual or biannual basis. In reality, these are hybrid career and job fairs, with company representative describing their work and—when positions are open—collecting CVs for potential hiring. The most recent round of these fairs, for example, held in five schools between October and December 2019, drew over 7,300 job-seekers and 110 employers.

Interestingly, women had far more positive comments to share about the career fairs than men, perhaps because it was more significant in expanding their access to potential employers than for men who already had opportunities for such exposure. One young woman commented, “The career fair was very helpful. I went in to learn as much as I could. So, I showed my CV to many employers, so they could tell me what is wrong with it. They gave me so much valuable feedback. I edited it after that. They boosted my confidence too by encouraging me to apply and not give up my search.” Another mentioned, “The career fair was helpful because I did many interviews during the event. The most important one was at AGB (bank). I didn’t get any response, but I still think it was a good experience. I ended up creating my own thing. I am teaching English intensively to middle school students. The CDC experience mainly taught me to not just wait for opportunities and rather create my own. You could also go and volunteer. There are so many alternatives.”

Several young women also mentioned the employability skills they developed through assisting with and volunteering at the career fairs: “It gave me an idea about event management and how it’s something I am interested in now,” said one young woman. “I learned that through volunteering for the career fair.”

However, some career fairs apparently did not meet participants' expectations. This is likely due in large part to the fact that Algerian employers themselves—particularly outside of Algiers—are not familiar with this kind of event and still need more orientation as to how to prepare and participate for maximum mutual benefit. One young man commented, “The career fair seems to be a waste of time. The minimum that employers present in the fair could do is to have some sort of exchange with the job-seekers. Employers just take in the CV and that’s it. I don’t find it helpful at all. None of my friends or I had any call back from any of the employers. I think they are missing the point which is recruitment. They’re not here to present their products.” With the YEP project supporting so many career fairs across nine very distinct parts of the country, there should be ample room for exchange and learning among career centers on how to improve their organization and orientation for employer participants.

Some participants also commented on specific **technical and vocational trainings**. Participants particularly appreciated the Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) trainings and marketing trainings—both of which were offered in multiple YEP participating schools. “HSE has added so much value to me,” said one young woman, “because I am in the technical field.” A young man said, “HSE was a very needed for me. Being in electrical engineering, I’d say it’s crucial to have that type of expertise.” Another commented, “Marketing was amazing. I wasn’t aware of how important it was. It changed my perspective on how to do things. It opened many doors for me after the trainings. It has so many applications in reality.”

However, several participants also commented that certain technical trainings needed to be longer, and that others needed more employer input or even employer-verified certification. “Technical trainings are way too short. Certain types of technical trainings cannot be reduced to less than six months,” said one young man. A young woman commented, “Many pharmacies didn’t take the “*vendeur en pharmacie*” training certificate seriously. They wouldn’t hire you even with that certificate. They don’t recognize it as being real. If the CDC had some sort of partnership with pharmacies or if they could help us get placed directly in certain pharmacies, it would be great. Maybe they could get the certificate given validated by the ministry of labor.” The YEP project has already encouraged CDCs to do additional employer outreach on the validity and recognition of these trainings and resulting certificates.

Many participants also had recommendations regarding additional technical trainings to be offered (see sidebar). The most prevalent of these have been discussed previously—the need for language training in French and English, and the need for basic IT skills and more advanced software trainings. Specific software cited included Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SPSS, SolidWorks, electrical and civil

REQUESTED TECHNICAL TRAININGS

- Language training (French and English)
- Basic IT skills and more advanced software trainings
- Legal work code
- First Aid
- HSE Security
- Teaching methodologies
- Hospitality and tourism
- Customer service
- Hospice and patient care
- Pharmaceuticals and cosmetics quality control
- Website and app design and programming

Several of these trainings are already offered in some of the YEP schools but not in others.

engineering software, and accounting software. Other suggestions included: trainings on the legal work code, First Aid, HSE security, teaching methodologies, hospitality and tourism, customer service, hospice and patient care, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics quality control, and website and app design and programming. It should be noted that several of these trainings are already offered in some of the YEP schools but not in others.

One young woman said, “I wish we could learn about the legal work code. When you get hired you don’t know much about your rights and how contracts work, absences and sick leaves. It’s all new information that might be overwhelming and you might get into trouble just for your ignorance. To get a sort of training about it would help a lot of people.”

Ultimately, the selection of relevant technical and vocational trainings also depends on the labor market’s demonstrated needs. YEP schools received initial advice from the YEP project on the course offerings they could develop, based on local labor market analyses conducted when each school began collaborating with the YEP project. The next phase of development for these schools and career centers is to engage in more direct and ongoing analysis of labor market skills needs, through regular reviews of recent job postings on online platforms, and through regular in-person discussions with employers. These are strategies that the YEP project continues to encourage as part of project sustainability.

SOFT SKILLS THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECT SERVICES ARE ALREADY BUILDING

During focus group discussions, participants were asked to describe whether there was any particular learning experience in the career centers that helped them with their job search. As participants responded with memories of the workshops they had experienced and the learning they had engaged in with peers, they also frequently described in their own words the soft skills they had developed. Such spontaneous responses revealed clear patterns and trends, which can be later tested on a larger scale through a tracer study survey.

Based on this qualitative research data, there is **strong evidence** that the content and methods of the soft skills courses—including group work, relationship-building and interaction with peers, group discussions, group presentation, and exposure to diversity and the concept that all talents and ways of being have a place in the world—are developing a core set of the soft skills prioritized in the previous section of this report: positive self-concept, communication skills, and social skills (see Figure 7).

There is also **moderate evidence**—meaning that the skill was spontaneously mentioned by multiple participants, but roughly half as many as with the previous set—that the current program is building self-motivation or initiative, and goal-setting.

Figure 7: Skills the Current YEP Model is Building


Qualitative evidence shows all these skills are being built; with the strongest findings shown in darker colors.



These are in addition to the functional job search skills already discussed previously: the ability to create a CV that is customized to the employer and job opportunity, and interviewing with confidence (strong evidence that our courses are helping youth excel in these skills), and establishing career goals, and understanding core job search strategies (moderate evidence).

Over one-fifth of focus group discussion participants spontaneously described improved **positive self-concept, self-knowledge, and self-confidence** as a result of participating in the YEP soft skills courses. This was strongly related to content learned in the Leadership course, where participants learned about different personalities and found that they gained confidence in themselves and the value of their own way of being as a result. Other important lessons came from learning to talk about the personal flaws or weaknesses in a positive light during the interview workshop, and learning more about themselves during the Tamheed career counseling session—positive self-concept seemed to be tied to self-knowledge, in these comments. For young women, comments about developing a positive self-concept were also connected to becoming more “daring”. A number of comments about developing self-confidence, from both men and women, were also about overcoming social shyness, which is addressed below.

One young woman explained, “Soft skills in general made me more aware of skills I didn't know I had.” Another remarked, “The leadership workshop taught me to dare more and take more risks. It taught me about my personality and Tamheed oriented me to do what I liked.”



“TAMHEED TAUGHT ME ABOUT PARTS
OF ME THAT I DIDN'T KNOW. I
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SEEMS THAT I HAD IT IN ME.”

Young woman, YEP participant

Several young women highlighted the role played by career counseling: “Tamheed taught me about parts of me that I didn't know. I thought that I was too reserved to take risks and dare but it seems that I had it in me.” And another explained, “The module on job interviews was also of great help. I had never been to a job interview before. So, having that type of preparedness is essential. I think the best learning lesson from it is talking about my flaws in a more positive light. Tamheed taught me more about myself than I thought it would. It helped me realize what I want, what I have, and what I am.”

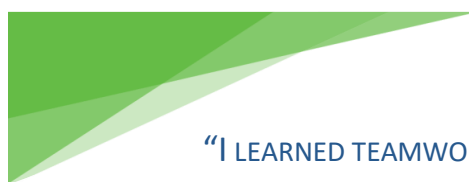
Similarly large numbers voluntarily described how the courses improved their **communication skills** and **social skills**, often in intertwined ways. They particularly referenced the role of group activities in the courses as well as speaking or presenting in front of their peers to help them overcome shyness, become more open and outgoing, work better with groups, and learn how to communicate effectively. Some also mentioned the role of the job interview course in helping them develop professional oral communication and body language.

“I didn't know many people before joining the CDC,” said one young man. “In here, I interacted with so many people like me who were also seeking a job. Also, practicing public speaking during class was amazing. I was never that good at presenting in front of a group. The interactivity of the teaching is really helpful.” Another said, “I learned to speak in public thanks to the activities in class. I was a little shy, so it gave me courage and pushed me to talk more. I also learned to debate better and that's it's ok to have healthy differences.”

Participants remarked on these changes in themselves as well as in their peers. One young man explained, “I’ve seen so many people in the group that had changed. There were girls that used to be very shy and at the end they became much more outspoken.” And young women themselves echoed this analysis. “It helped me become less shy. I was always hesitant when meeting new people but doing the group activities—ice breakers and others—and public speaking ones helped me break out of my shell.” Another young woman added, “I think my whole group was very shy and reserved at first but through the activities we learned to loosen up. The exchange was very motivating.”

While these skills were often intertwined in comments, some comments also focused specifically on **social skills** such as group problem-solving and conflict management, teamwork, and building relationships and networks. “I learned more interpersonal skills through dealing with the people here at the CDC,” one young man commented. “There are so many activities we do at the trainings that make us negotiate and work together.” Another remarked, “I learned through the interactive activities how to work with groups and how to cooperate with others. It helped me accept other’s opinions and how to convince others of mine.”

A young woman explained, “I am more flexible now. I deal with others better and don’t shy away from interacting with them. This is thanks to the teaching technique: working in groups and debating with others. For me, it’s a huge accomplishment!” Another young woman linked her social exposure at the career center to greater assertiveness and confidence at work. “I am more daring,” she said. “For example, I used to always want to have someone with me at the pharmacy. Working alone and dealing alone with clients used to intimidate me. I built my self-confidence and my independence by doing presentations in front of a group. This exposure helped me get rid of the self-doubt and anxiety.”



“I LEARNED TEAMWORK, I LEARNED TO LISTEN BETTER. NOW, I MAKE AN EFFORT TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING OTHERS. I LEARNED TO COOPERATE AND UNDERSTOOD THAT DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES COMPLETED ONE ANOTHER WITHIN A GROUP. THIS ALSO JUST GAVE ME MORE SELF-CONFIDENCE. I REALIZED I COULD GIVE MUCH MORE.”

Young man, YEP participant

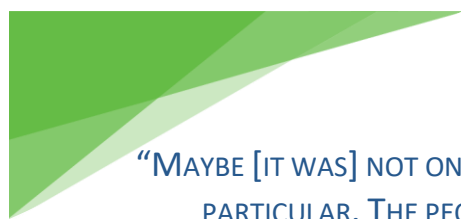
Another young man explained, “I learned teamwork, I learned to listen better. Now, I make an effort towards understanding others. I learned to cooperate and understood that different personalities completed one another within a group. This also just gave me more self-confidence. I realized I could give much more.”

A moderate number of participants (approximately one-tenth of respondents) also spontaneously described developing more **self-motivation or personal initiative** as a result of their soft skills trainings. “I learned to motivate myself better,” said one young woman. “I have motivation I never had before. I realized we are our own obstacles.” Another said, “It was a source of motivation. It fueled my job search and gave me a more proactive mindset.”

Respondents talked about how their instructors motivated them, but even more, how other participants’ stories and attitudes gave them a new sense of purpose. A young man stated, “It changed my perspective on this whole journey of job search. This is all thanks to other people and how they think and act. They

motivated me.” A young woman remarked, “I was very inspired by other participants. I was very curious about their own journeys and what they did in their careers. It gave me a reason to develop myself more.”

Finally, a similar number of respondents emphasized the role of the soft skills trainings in developing **goal-orientation**, describing how the soft skills courses helped them set personal and professional goals, raising their standards about striving to achieve something in their lives. Many of them described this as a total result of the soft skills experience, rather than a single training alone. “Soft skills in general taught me how to set goals,” said one young man. Another said, “All soft skills modules were helpful. The four days added value to me. for example, I used to write my CV completely the wrong way. I learned to do it much better now. It changed my mind too. I used to think I graduate from this place and would do this job and that’s it. I wouldn’t advance very much. But If I do something I have passion for, I can go even further.”



“MAYBE [IT WAS] NOT ONE WORKSHOP IN PARTICULAR. THE PEOPLE I TOOK THE TRAININGS WITH HAVE CHANGED MY MIND ABOUT MY CAREER PATH. I INITIALLY WANTED ANY JOB. I DID NOT CARE WHAT IT WOULD BE. I DID NOT HAVE ANY STANDARDS. I HAD VERY UNAMBITIOUS CAREER GOALS... [BUT] THROUGH THE EXCHANGE, I LEARNED TO WIDEN MY POSSIBILITIES.”

Young woman, YEP participant

A young woman reaffirmed this trend: “Maybe [it was] not one workshop in particular. The people I took the trainings with have changed my mind about my career path. I initially wanted any job. I did not care what it would be. I did not have any standards. I had very unambitious career goals. I had this idea that anything would do. But I was thankfully surrounded by educated and ambitious people that convinced me to re-take my Baccalaureate exam after I failed the first time. Through the exchange, I learned to widen my possibilities.”

Other soft skills with multiple mentions in this research data—though fewer than above— included entrepreneurialism and creating one’s own opportunities, civic engagement and volunteerism, valuing diversity and inclusion, persuasiveness and negotiation, having the courage to “dare” to achieve a goal, decision-making, and increased adaptability and flexibility.

Overall, there is significant qualitative evidence in this data that the current YEP model is developing the soft skills of positive self-concept, communication skills, social skills, self-motivation, and goal-orientation. Some individuals also seemed to build additional skills through these courses, as mentioned above. Based on these qualitative or inductive findings, YEP plans to undertake further research through its biannual tracer studies to gather statistically representative data on the magnitude of these trends. What is certain is that the YEP soft skills courses are having a powerfully positive effect on many young Algerians.

One young man told his story of how the soft skills courses, combined with the technical training he received in marketing, prepared him to create his own opportunity rather than waiting for a job: “I had graduated with an electrical engineering degree, so I wanted something in that field,” he recalled. “I was a bit limited in my thoughts, that’s all I kind of wanted. I didn’t think of doing anything else. But then I heard of the CDC and their soft skills training. I came to the MBI and wanted to learn more about it. They

told me they also had marketing. I decided to enroll in both. I had always thought that marketing was about doing an ad and that's it. I didn't know it had so many aspects. Our trainer had opened my eyes into things that I never thought existed. He pretty much introduced us to the real marketing, studying the market, adapting the services to it. It had much more to it than just putting up a silly ad."

"A little while after finishing my trainings here," he continued, "I heard from a friend that there was a job opportunity at Burger food. Thanks to what I learned from my marketing training, I started seeing what the business was doing wrong. It all started as a conversation with the owner, I started giving suggestions on how he could optimize his profit. I had realized that they were over staffed and that their staff was demotivated because they weren't paid enough. Instead, I suggested he would let go of some of his employees and higher the salaries of the remaining ones. Like that, he's having the same cost, but it's more efficiently distributed. I got offered a full-time job the after a while I became a partner. I told the owner that if I was going to also handle their marketing and instead of asking for a higher salary for the responsibilities I had to handle, I rather have a partner position. Like that if we are profiting, we profit together and if we are failing, we are also failing together."

GENERAL EVALUATIONS

Overall, respondent comments showed appreciation for the experiences gained during participation in YEP services, with many mentioning that they would like to have the opportunity to attend more such trainings. "I wish you could allow us to experience more classes and trainings," one respondent commented, for example, "because the one I attended has affected positively my knowledge." A large number of respondents in fact recommended that significantly more time needed to be given to soft skills trainings—such as one full day per module, rather than the current 2-2.5 hours, and spread out over time rather than condensed on consecutive days.

In great part, **they enjoyed the interactive teaching methods of the courses**, which World Learning works to ensure are distinct from Algeria's classic classroom lecture style. As one participant said, "I loved the teaching technique. It's much more dynamic than the traditional teaching way. This makes the experience much more pleasant and much more efficient." A woman commented, "In all honesty, I think that the CDC is beyond amazing. It has given us information that helped me discover my weaknesses and how to improve them. Thank you very much and for the amazing spirit." Another woman wrote in her individual questionnaire, "It's an awakening experience. It opens doors to new opportunities. It helped me decrease my fear of the employment world. Thank you so much." And a man offered this appreciation: "I would like to thank the CDC team about their efforts and for training us. They really showed us things we haven't seen before and that I did not get the chance to discover during my five years in university."



"I LOVED THE TEACHING TECHNIQUE.
IT'S MUCH MORE DYNAMIC THAN THE
TRADITIONAL WAY. THIS MAKES THE
EXPERIENCE MUCH MORE PLEASANT
AND MUCH MORE EFFICIENT."

Young man, YEP participant

Several wrote about how the soft skills courses helped them to connect their personal abilities more to their job search, such as one woman who wrote, "The CDC was the first step that helped me find a job that fits my personal skills best." A young man wrote, "The CDC plays an important role in connecting

different parts of the community together. It does an amazing job at connecting job-seekers with the jobs that fit them most.”

Others, however, noted that they are still struggling. “I am a Master’s degree holder,” said one unemployed young woman. “I have written a good CV and good cover letter. I still do not receive any call or anything. I wonder what’s the problem!!”

Some recommendations given by individual respondents included offering Tamheed career counseling at a younger age (before educational tracks are determined), ensuring training rooms are of a sufficient size (or fewer participants per training in a particular school²⁰), tailoring the job interview experience to candidates’ fields of work, and offering more scaffolding or practice in analyzing job postings—“Provide more opportunities to help participants learn how to match their profiles with job requirements and offer job description to get more information on the job and be more confident”, one suggested.



“THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY.
BECAUSE OF HOW HELPFUL IT WAS,
THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
WHO I WAS BEFORE THE TRAINING,
AND WHO I AM NOW.”

Young man, YEP participant

Others requested more follow up support from the CDC—including a newsletter and follow-up sessions, more job shadowing opportunities, and having the career centers connect participants more directly to jobs: “I would like to stress on the fact of having the CDC connecting us directly with employers,” said one young woman. “They have the connections here. It would be of great help to all of us”. An unemployed young man wrote, “One more suggestion would be to add entrepreneurship workshop. Anything about building a project and implementing it would be

amazing.” Both of these suggestions are aspects the YEP project is already working on—within the bounds of what is allowed by government regulations.

Overall, the feedback from participants was enthusiastic. One young woman said, “It is an amazing initiative to help us job-seekers improve our skills and encourage us go through the different obstacles and orient us to the right path in terms of careers. The CDC has played a complementary role in improving our knowledge and start a healthy job seeking journey.” Another offered, “The experience at the CDC was unique because I developed so much since I joined, and I would like to give back and help more young people benefit from the same experience.”

One young man summed up the experience: “Thank you for the opportunity. Because of how helpful it was, there is a big difference between who I was before the training, and who I am now.”

IV. FEATURED STORIES AND QUOTES, BY PROJECT SITE

Many of the young men and women involved in this research had inspiring stories to share, and deep personal feedback about the impact of the YEP project and career centers in their lives. Following is a selection of such comments from one young man and one young women at each of the sites included in this research.

Adrar, young man: “Most job-seekers search for jobs that match their competencies and their majors or field of study, and do not look for jobs related to their skills. But, some English teachers did not study English but they are good in their work because they are good in communication. Also, others give up after not succeeding in the first job interview, and may lose hope. They do not subscribe for professional development trainings to update their CVs. I always wanted to become a teacher, I needed a degree, but I did not have public speaking and communication skills. Also, I did not have knowledge on interactive teaching using new methods and fun activities. [Because of the Leadership course], I overcame my public speaking fear and gained more self-confidence for job interviews. Through using Facebook as a tool to search for a job, I found an opportunity online.”

Adrar, young woman: “I have already gotten a job I wanted so much at the Islamic Cultural Center in Adrar as an Event Organizer. I got the job through networking; it was a friend who told me about it. Also, I started going to search for jobs in different public offices and administrations, which is an achievement in itself for me. I graduated in June, and I started working in October.”

Biskra, young man: “Tamheed opened my eyes on many things. I learned through the process that I am someone who enjoys persuasion. It showed me that I had the skills to convince people about things which led me to the field of marketing and sales. But also, how to use these skills in real life. Mostly, I learned about my strengths. This was helpful because it then led me to sell myself better to employers through my CV, motivation letter and ever during the job interview. I learned to use the theory we learned here in real practical situations. It taught me how to be more persuasive and how to distinguish my profile from other profiles. The job search taught me how to create a procedure and work with it. Before that, my job search was just erratic.”

Biskra, young woman: “Maybe [it was] not one workshop in particular. The people I took the trainings with have changed my mind about my career path. I initially wanted any job. I did not care what it would be. I did not have any standards. I had very unambitious career goals. I had this idea that anything would do. But I was thankfully surrounded by educated and ambitious people that convinced me to re-take my Baccalaureate exam after I failed the first time. Through the exchange, I learned to widen my possibilities.”

Blida, young man: “Orientation is very important and simply knowing what you want and what you are good at. I, for one, graduated as an architect without a specialization as the system doesn't train you in one area. I then worked as a commercial architect. I wasn't very good at it. I don't know how to sell things, it's not in my nature. I think it's important that one knows what their strengths are from early on to avoid

wasting time trying out things that might not work for them. That is a problem caused by the education. There is a huge difference between the formal education and the market. [At the career center], CV writing was helpful. My CV prior to that was terrible, but I learned through the training to write a proper one and even helped my entourage write better CVs. The job interview module was also helpful. It showed me to answer questions better. I think also that my Tamheed test was very much on point. It really represented what I wanted and my capabilities. I wish I had it in high school, though, because now it's too late. It showed me that I would be good in the tourism industry which is something I was already tempted by. Now I do architecture, it's too late to switch careers. To find a job, I created a network and let everyone know that I was looking for a job. This worked because I knew someone that introduced me to an architect who was hiring and that's how I got my first job. After that, I went to a career fair where I took in as many contacts as possible and then many, many emails with my CV."

Blida, young woman: "I struggled with setting objectives and I was always under pressure to choose my career. Even if I got 2 or 3 opportunities, I did not know how to choose and wanted all things. I did not have professional maturity. I subscribed for the Soft Skills training first, then had some trainings on Personal Development with AYC (the Algerian Youth Camp). After my graduation, I took Marketing trainings, I sent my CV through online job portals Emploitic and Emploi Partner. I got a lot of job interviews as 'Medical Representative'. The CDC helped me to reinforce my career choices and support my decision to make them clear. I also had a follow up call with my career counselor to get her advice before entering the job interview."

El Oued, young man: "Exchange with other students of the career center was amazing. People have taught me how to talk, when to talk, and that you don't have to talk all the time. The diversity of educational backgrounds was very enriching. Others add value from their own experiences. There was this particular woman who inspired me because, even though she had a child that she had to take care of, she would show up to class and learn while bringing her child with her. It gave me so much motivation. I developed my social skills and widened my network."

El Oued, young woman: "The career fair was helpful because I did many interviews during the event. The most important one was at AGB (bank). I didn't get any response, but I still think it was a good experience. I ended up creating my own thing. I am teaching English intensively to middle school students. The CDC experience mainly taught me to not just wait for opportunities and rather create my own. You could also go and volunteer. There are so many alternatives."

Oran, young man: "When we attended the Soft Skills training, some participants missed the motivation to draw their career path and came with a negative idea on the job search. I believe this makes the difference, because after the training we were convinced that jobs are available, and the journey starts right after the training. I did not value my skills and competencies before. I also learned that *you* need to search for the job, not the other way around. Soft Skills training helped me a lot to get a job. I updated my CV after attending CV workshop, I prepared for my

interview and I was confident the day of the job interview. All these steps helped at the end to get a job.”

Oran, young woman: “The weakness that I had is that I did not know how to search for a job, I did not even have an idea about all the steps that job-seekers should follow. I learned how to write a CV and a Cover Letter, I learned how to draw my career path and how to overcome the ‘experience’ obstacle that all job-seekers fear, through volunteering and joining associations. [I also got] continuous support and encouragement from my career counselor when preparing for the interview, because I stress a lot. After the Soft Skills trainings, I started as an intern at the "Ecole Chantier" of SDH association to gain more experience, also I was a facilitator at cultural events. These steps, although they seem small, but they helped me to become more professional.”

Setif, young woman: “When I came out of the CV writing workshops, I couldn’t believe the mistakes that I made in my old CV. I had a very empty and simplistic CV. It only had few lines of my previous trainings and education. So, after the workshop, I added many more items. I previously didn’t give importance to many things that employers may have found interesting about me. Now, it’s two pages long and contains more details about my experience and jobs I occupied. I kept adding as my experience was growing.”

Setif, young man: “I had graduated with an electrical engineering degree, so I wanted something in that field. I was a bit limited in my thoughts, that’s all I kind of wanted. I didn’t think of doing anything else. But then I heard of the CDC and their soft skills training. I came to the MBI and wanted to learn more about it. They told me they also had marketing. I decided to enroll in both. I had always thought that marketing was about doing an ad and that’s it. I didn’t know it had so many aspects. Our trainer had opened my eyes into things that I never thought existed. He pretty much introduced us to the real marketing, studying the market, adapting the services to it. It had much more to it than just putting up a silly ad. A little while after finishing my trainings here, I heard from a friend that there was a job opportunity at Burger food. Thanks to what I learned from my marketing training, I started seeing what the business was doing wrong. It all started as a conversation with the owner, I started giving suggestions on how he could optimize his profit. I had realized that they were over staffed and that their staff was demotivated because they weren’t paid enough. Instead, I suggested he would let go of some of his employees and higher the salaries of the remaining ones. Like that, he’s having the same cost, but it’s more efficiently distributed. I got offered a full-time job the after a while I became a partner. I told the owner that if I was going to also handle their marketing and instead of asking for a higher salary for the responsibilities I had to handle, I would rather have a partner position. Like that if we are profiting, we profit together and if we are failing, we are also failing together.”

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has highlighted the strengths of the Youth Employment Project and its partner schools and career centers, in building a core set of soft skills and functional employability skills among Algerian youth. The qualitative evidence suggests the project's strengths in building positive self-concept, communication skills, social skills, self-motivation, and goal-setting, as well as inspiring youth to set career goals, and teaching youth to write CVs and personal statements that are responsive to employer demand, to interview with confidence, and to employ a variety of job search strategies to find work (see Figure 8).

Discussions with youth around their personal weaknesses, external obstacles they face in finding employment, and the differences they perceive between employed and unemployed youth also revealed a core set of skills needed for successful youth employment in Algeria. Combined with employer perspectives, the research suggests a set of 12 essential soft skills and 6 core functional employability skills all youth need in this context to attain their goals. These skills are summarized in Figure 9.

Figure 8: Skills the Current YEP Model is Building

Qualitative evidence shows all these skills are being built; with the strongest findings shown in darker colors.



Figure 9: 18 Skills Algerian Youth Need to Gain Employment



Intrapersonal

- Positive self-concept
- Self-motivation
- Perseverance
- Adaptability
- Managing emotions
- Goal-orientation
- Conscientiousness



Interpersonal

- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Professionalism



Cognitive

- Problem-solving
- Planning & Time management

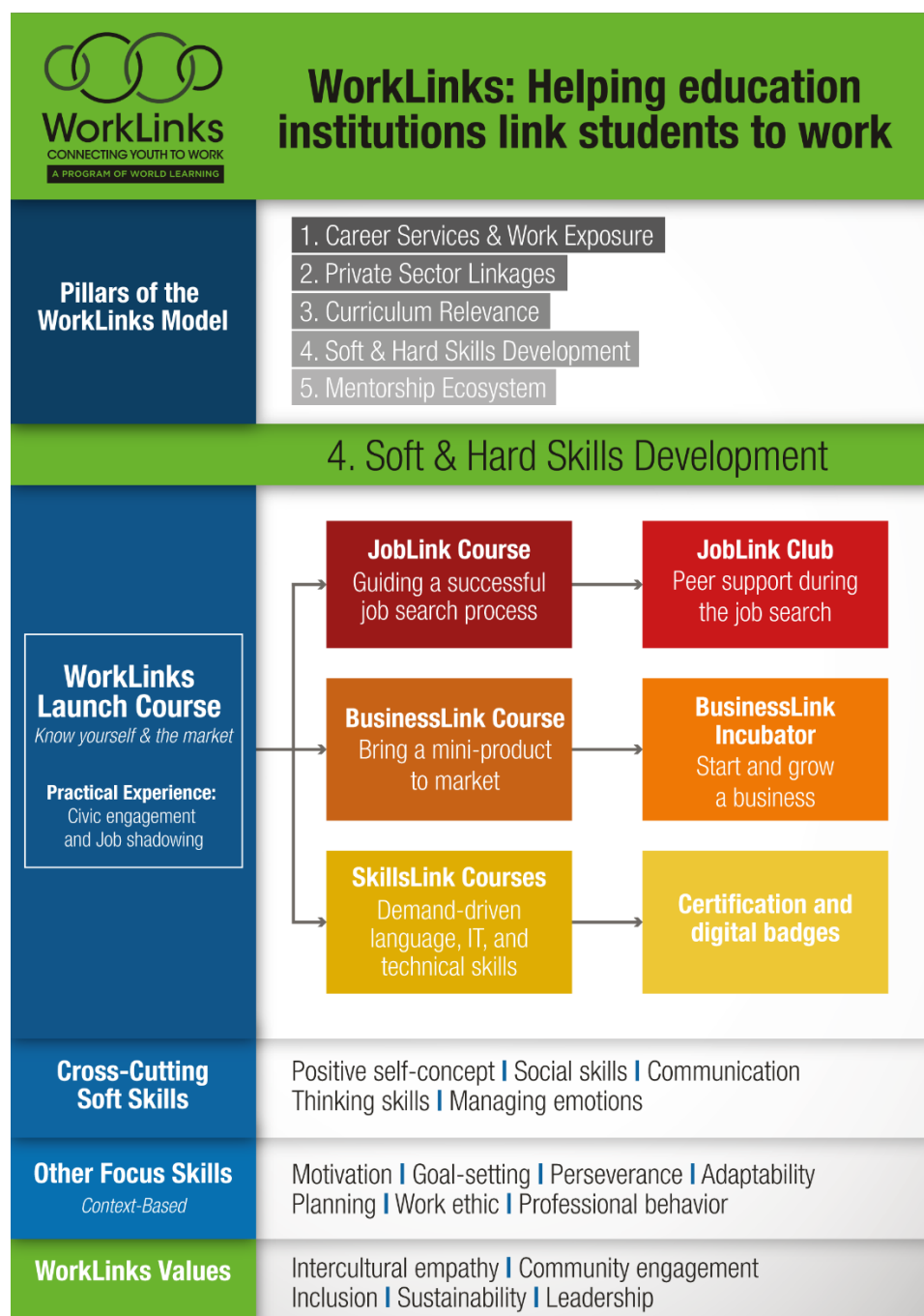


Functional

- Language skills
- IT/Software skills
- Career planning
- Job search strategies
- CVs and online profiles
- Job interviews

Given the research findings, which confirm that some of these skills are already being effectively built by the YEP curriculum and other career services, and point to other new areas of focus that have not been previously emphasized, it is clear that the YEP project and its partner career centers can now explore refining the current curriculum to ensure even stronger employment outcomes for youth. The following model illustrates the new employability and soft skills curriculum structure now under development, in response to this research (see Figure 10). In turn, the research and curriculum development undertaken through the YEP project in Algeria is serving as an important basis for World Learning's global WorkLinks approach to youth workforce development around the world.

Figure 10: Soft and hard skills development in the WorkLinks approach



The new WorkLinks Employability Skills Curriculum will be offered through an integrated experiential learning methodology that gradually builds a set of five cross-cutting soft skills with the strongest international research support for positive youth workforce outcomes—positive self-concept, social skills, communication skills, thinking skills (including critical thinking and problem-solving), and self-control (including managing emotions).²¹ All of these skills appeared in this research as highly important for the Algerian context as well as being supported internationally. In addition, to respond to the issues raised by youth and adults in the YEP research, it also includes targeted lessons and activities focused on additional soft skills shown to be of importance for finding and retaining employment in the Algerian context—self-motivation and initiative, goal-setting, perseverance, adaptability, planning, conscientiousness or being hardworking and dependable, and professionalism. Further, the curriculum is infused with the core values that World Learning promotes in an effort to build a more peaceful, just, and inclusive world.

The curriculum develops these soft skills at the same time as leading participants through a set of modules that focus on functional employability skills. This begins with the exploration-based **WorkLinks Launch Course** of relevance for all youth, covering five modules: Know your purpose, Know yourself, Know the market, Know the workplace, and Know your next steps. Responding to young people’s requests for more direct work exposure opportunities, this course includes a job shadowing experience as integral to the final two modules. Following this course, participants may choose one or more branch paths to follow, as described below.

If they are primarily interested in employment, they may follow the **JobLink Course**, which teaches youth to develop a job search plan; understand online personal branding and the creation of a customized CV that shows the linkage between their skills and experience and a particular job posting; develops professional writing skills through the cover letter drafting and revisions process; builds professional communication, networking, and interviewing skills; engages youth in workplace problem-solving scenarios; and addresses strategies for overcoming obstacles during the job search—including health issues, disability, discrimination, and the obstacles specific to Algeria that were identified in this research (see Figure 11). Responding to young people’s requests for further support in the job search process, as well as the sense of some youth that they lack the peer networks they need to find out about job opportunities, the course is to be followed by grouping young people into small job search clubs intended to provide peer support until all members have found employment.

Figure 11: Major external factors hindering the job search in Algeria

Major external factors hindering the job search

- Lack of practice and work experience
- Few job openings in certain fields
- Residency regulations, distance to jobs
- Delays due to ANEM procedures
- Nepotism and favoritism
- Low pay

Men: Military service, gender discrimination

Women: Gender discrimination, lack of family support for career goals

If youth are primarily interested in entrepreneurship and business start-up, they will be oriented towards the **BusinessLink Course**. During this course, they will bring a mini-product to market and learn about each stage of entrepreneurship along the way. They also learn core business and social enterprise skills, including global and local awareness of challenges, needs, and opportunities; vision and ability to imagine something new or improved; social responsibility; business and market research; product pricing; financial literacy, budgeting, and financial management; and marketing. This course is to be followed by the

establishment of business incubators within certain career centers, or linkage to external business incubators, so that those with promising business ideas can receive additional support during the start-up phase.

Finally, many youth may also discover during the WorkLinks Launch course or subsequent courses that they need further technical or vocational skills such as in languages, IT/digital literacy, specific software, or a variety of demand-driven trainings. These will continue to be part of the model that YEP is offering, with support for YEP career centers to engage regularly with employers to determine the most important courses to offer. Where feasible, these courses should be linked to employer-recognized assessments and certifications.

This curricular revision constitutes the core of the recommendations emerging from this research. The research also suggested certain other steps that may be taken to enhance the effectiveness of YEP's core model. Following are **key recommendations emerging from this research**.

1. **Revise the current YEP employability and soft skills curriculum** and post-training supports to match the structure described above, and train career center counselors in the new content and methods.
2. **Revisit the suite of technical and vocational trainings** offered by each career center site to ensure that they reflect the findings in this research, as well as updated employer perspectives and local market demand. Seek coherence with local or international assessment and certification systems.
3. **Support career centers to develop agreements with local employers** for one-day or one-week job shadowing experiences that will provide first-time job-seekers with needed professional experience and exposure to workplace norms. To reduce employer burden, the career centers should provide some very simple guidance to employers on how to accomplish this with minimal extra work for the staff involved—such as one page of top tips, including allowing youth to sit with a mentor in the workplace, having the mentor tell them about what they are working on, coming up with one task the youth can work on, and allowing youth to attend a meeting or site visit.
4. **Invest in orienting employers better to the purpose and structure of the career/job fairs.** Also reorganize the job fairs to situate employers by major industry, and offer every attendee the opportunity for a 10-minute practice interview with at least one employer attendee in their industry of interest.
5. **Build career center sustainability** by investigating the possibilities for offering demand-driven training to employers for a fee. Further, wherever the career fairs have become more established and expected, employers should be charged for certain priority treatment (larger table, logo placement on promotional materials, plenary speaking time; or co-sponsorship arrangements such as providing refreshments or space). More basic participation should remain free of charge, however, to ensure that more companies participate.
6. **Consider future project possibilities**, as follows:
 - a. Engage with the Algerian secondary school system to offer earlier-stage career advising, to help better orient youth in career paths that reflect market demand and their own particular interests and skills.

- b. Build a system of social impact venture capital investing in youth businesses, matched by a network of business incubators that will help truly promising business ideas get off the ground.
- c. Expand the capacity of the new YEP-sponsored Algerian career center federation Techghil to offer demand-driven soft skills trainings for employees and management consulting services as a means of promoting business growth, increased employment opportunities, and more equitable employment practices, as well as serving as a source of sustainable revenue for Algerian career centers into the future.

Ultimately, this research bolsters the argument that local perspectives matter. While there may be robust international and regional research findings regarding the priority soft skills to emphasize for youth employment, the experiences of youth in a particular context—and the perspectives of their prospective future employers—must be taken into account in order to truly understand how to address the youth employment challenge.

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ See, for example, Gates, S., Lippman, L., Sadownen, N., Burke, H., Diener, O., & and Malkin, M. (2016). Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes. Washington, DC: USAID YouthPower: Implementation. Kautz, T., Heckman, J., Diris, R., ter Weel, B., & Borghans, L. (2014). Fostering and measuring skills: Improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success. OECD. And Lippman, L., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K. (2015). Key "soft skills" that foster youth workforce success: Toward a consensus across fields. WorkForce Connections (FHI 360/USAID).
- ² Lippman, L., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., and Moore, K. 2015. Key soft skills that foster youth workforce success: toward a consensus across fields. Washington, Dc: Child Trends and USAID YouthPower.
- ³ Gates, S., Lippman, L., Shadowen, N., Burke, H., Diener, O., and Malkin, M. 2016. Key soft skills for cross-sectoral youth outcomes. Washington, DC: USAID YouthPower.
- ⁴ WB, "World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work" (World Bank, 2018).
- ⁵ World Economic Forum, "The Future of Jobs: 2018". (WEF, 2018).
- ⁶ "The Skills Gap in the Middle East and North Africa A Real Problem or a Mere Trifle?" (Bayt.com/ YouGov, 2016).
- ⁷ World Learning is an international non-profit organization founded in 1932, currently operating in 60 countries worldwide. <https://www.worldlearninginc.org/2018impactreport/>
- ⁸ ONS, 2018. Activité, Emploi & Chômage en Septembre 2018. Office Nationale des Statistiques, Algeria. <http://www.ons.dz/IMG/emploiseptembre2018.pdf>
- ⁹ Kouaouci, A. 2004. Population transitions, youth unemployment, postponement of marriage, and violence in Algeria. *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 9, Issue 2. Also see Furceri, D. 2012. Unemployment and Labor Market Issues in Algeria. International Monetary Fund Working Paper. Note: there are very few recent academic publications in English focusing on Algeria, although there is abundant grey literature on youth in the broader MENA region.
- ¹⁰ Using the random integer generator at Random.org
- ¹¹ Informed consent procedures for this research were approved by the Institutional Review Board of World Learning's School for International Training (SIT), an accredited higher education institution.
- ¹² While there were originally 91 participants who consented to completing individual questionnaires, one subsequently did not consent to the follow-up focus group discussion.
- ¹³ Gates, S., Lippman, L., Shadowen, N., Burke, H., Diener, O., and Malkin, M. 2016. Key soft skills for cross-sectoral youth outcomes. Washington, DC: USAID YouthPower.
- ¹⁴ Contrat de Travail Aidé, a contract of employment mentioned in article 90.11 on labor relations. It is part of the DAIP system (Dispositif d'aide à l'insertion professionnelle.) It entails that a monthly financial contribution from the government is paid to the salary of the individual, in order to promote recruitment of youth without work experience
- ¹⁵ Honeyman, C. 2016. Soft skills development: Guiding notes for project and curriculum design and evaluation. Also see Soares, F., Babb, S., Diener, O., Gates, S., & and Ignatowski, C. (2017). Guiding principles for building soft skills among adolescents and young adults. Washington, DC: USAID YouthPower Implementation.
- ¹⁶ Lippman, L., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K. (2015). Key "soft skills" that foster youth workforce success: Toward a consensus across fields. WorkForce Connections (FHI 360/USAID).
- ¹⁷ <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/professionalism.htm>
- ¹⁸ World Learning's statements of values include the following:

Intercultural understanding & Empathy	"With open minds, empathy, and courage, we facilitate understanding of and respect for the commonalities and differences between people. We do this through cultural immersion and experiential learning, which leads us to seek and create a better world."
Community & Civic engagement	"We value active togetherness, reciprocity, and respect as the essential ingredients for sustainable community-building. With our presence and our programs, we create a global network of learners empowered to become community builders and collaborators."
Social inclusion & Justice	"We champion inclusion in all that we are and all that we do, from ensuring our community and our programs amplify the voices, agency, and dignity of all people to deliberately instilling the principles and practices of inclusion in all of our work. We seek a

	world in which individuals and communities are self-determining, interdependent, and equitable."
Sustainability	"We are committed to human and environmental well-being and contributing to a better world for all living and future generations"
Leadership	We promote leadership as the mobilization of activities and people, standing up for issues and seeing them through, raising awareness, and raising resources.

¹⁹ <http://www.tamheed.org/>

²⁰ Bacha school

²¹ Lippman, L., Ryberg, R., Carney, R., & Moore, K. (2015). Key "soft skills" that foster youth workforce success: Toward a consensus across fields. WorkForce Connections (FHI 360/USAID).

ANNEX: RESEARCH TOOLS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CAREER CENTER (CDC) ALUMNI

Site: _____

Dear Participant: Thank you for coming today to tell us about your experiences in the career center and in searching for work. The information we collect today is confidential—we will not be keeping track of your names or who says what. We plan to use this information to learn more about the experience of young adults who are searching for work, to improve our programs in the future, and to share this learning with others.

If you agree to participate, please put your initials here _____ and answer the following questions:

1. In what year were you born? _____
2. Check one: ☐ Male ☐ Female
3. Did you have any unpaid internship, paid employment or business experience prior to joining the career center (CDC)? Check one:
☐ Yes
☐ No
If yes, please fill in the following information:
Job title: _____
Employer: _____
Earnings per month: _____
4. What made you want to join activities at the career center (CDC)? Please check all that apply to you:
☐ I was bored, and it was something to do
☐ I thought it could help me find a job
☐ My friends told me to do it
☐ My parents or family member told me to do it
☐ I wanted to learn a new technical skill
☐ I wanted to learn about “soft skills”
☐ I wanted to have a certificate
☐ I wanted to get career counseling
☐ Other: Please specify below

5. List the steps you went through, or the strategies you used, to try to obtain an internship or employment, or start a business after completing your involvement in the CDC, for example: “I finalized and printed my C.V.”
a. _____ e. _____
b. _____ f. _____
c. _____ g. _____
d. _____ h. _____
6. Were you successful in obtaining an internship or employment after participating in the CDC?
☐ Yes
☐ No
If yes, please fill in the following information:
Job title: _____
Employer: _____
Earnings per month: _____
7. Do you feel that you had any personal weaknesses or a lack of any skills that made your job search more difficult? If so, please describe below:

8. At the career center (CDC), you gained access to a number of learning experiences, listed below. Were any of these helpful for your job search? Please check all the ones that were helpful.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online Tamheed assessments | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Resume Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-person career counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Cover Letter Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TVET Training (list course: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Job Interviews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Job Search |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Overcoming Obstacles | <input type="checkbox"/> Career Fair: Month and Year _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Career Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

9. Are there any of these were NOT very helpful for your job search? Please identify them below

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online Tamheed assessments | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Resume Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-person career counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Cover Letter Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TVET Training (list course: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Job Interviews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Job Search |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Overcoming Obstacles | <input type="checkbox"/> Career Fair: Month and Year _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Career Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

10. Are there other ways that participating in the career center (CDC) helped you with your job search?

11. Were there any other issues, outside of your control, that negatively impacted your job search?

12. Did you receive any other support, outside of your own efforts, that helped you obtain a job?

13. Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for participating! We will start a group discussion in a moment.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

[Interviewer, read aloud all text; text in brackets [] should be replaced with the appropriate specific information].

My name is [interviewer name]. I work with the Youth Employment Project, which has helped support the staff at your career center. I am here today with my colleague [notetaker name].

Voluntary participation: Thank you for coming today to tell us about your experiences in the career center and in searching for work. Your participation is voluntary, you are not required to participate if you do not want to. I will explain a bit more about the research and then ask if you agree to participate.

Confidentiality: The information we collect today is confidential—we will not be keeping track of your names or who says what. The list we used to invite you to this gathering is password protected and will not be shared.

Purpose of the study: We plan to use this information to learn more about the experience of young adults who are searching for work here in Algeria, to improve our programs in the future, and to share this learning with others through public presentations or publications. The analysis we eventually present will not identify any of you by name.

Study procedures: Your involvement in this study includes completion of a written questionnaire and participating in this discussion. In all, we expect this to take less than two hours of your time. During the discussion, we are taking notes about what everyone says so that later on we can analyze the information from many groups like this one.

No direct risks or benefits: We do not foresee any risk of harm from your participation in this research. You will also not benefit directly, other than the opportunity to share your experiences and hear the experiences of your peers. Your participation can, however, have indirect benefits through the improvement of career center services in your locality, based on the feedback you share.

Information requests: If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at [email] or our research lead at catherine.honeyman@worldlearning.org. This study has been reviewed and approved by a World Learning's School of International Training (SIT) Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676 Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676, USA, irb@sit.edu, +1-802-258-3132

Consent to participate: Your participation is voluntary. If you refuse to participate, you will not lose any benefits or face any other negative consequences. You may decide not to participate at any time, today or later. I need to ask you now if you agree to participate. If you do not want to participate, we will return your questionnaire to you, and you are free to go. Do you want to participate? ***[request an oral response from each participant]***

Discussion Protocol

1. This group is made up of [men/women] who [did/didn't] find employment after participating in the career center (CDC). Do you think there is any difference between you and those [with the opposite outcome]?

2. Tell me about the steps you went through to try to obtain an internship or employment, or start a business, after completing your involvement in the CDC.
3. Do you feel that you had any personal weaknesses or a lack of any skills that made your job search more difficult?
4. Were there any particular learning experiences in the CDC that helped you with your job search? I'm going to list each of them and then ask you to talk about any of them that helped you.

<input type="checkbox"/> Online Tamheed assessments	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Resume Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> In-person career counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Cover Letter Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> TVET Training (list course: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Job Interviews
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Job Search
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Overcoming Obstacles	<input type="checkbox"/> Career Fair: Month and Year _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft Skills: Career Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

 - a. [For each one mentioned]: How did that help you?
5. Was there any CDC learning experience that was NOT helpful in your job search? Why?
6. Do you feel there are any other things that the CDC should be teaching in order to be more helpful?
7. Are there other ways that participating in the CDC helped you with your job search?
8. Were there any other issues, outside of your control, that negatively impacted your job search?
9. Did you receive any other support, outside of your own efforts, that helped you obtain a job?
10. Do you have any other comments for us today?

Thank you for your participation!