



# The Power of Youth In Co-Creating Curriculum

Reimagining Alternative  
Pathways Through  
Occupational Qualifications

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# Framing the Crisis

- Youth unemployment crisis in South Africa
- Misalignment between education and labour needs
- Growing disengagement from traditional path ways
- **Question:** Why do young people avoid TVET
- RSA is not facing a youth crisis – we are facing a system design crisis
- We have built an education system that produces qualifications....but not necessarily livelihoods

# **Youth Voice – From Participation to Influence**

- Youth want immediate employment pathways
- They want practical, work-based learning
- Flexibility and relevance
- Alignment to UNESCO indicator on meaningful participation
- From voice to impact – Youth must shape policy and curriculum

# **The Reality – Youth Are Already Voting with their Feet**

- Declining trust in long programmes
- Growth of online learning, short course (micro-credentials) and informal skills acquisition
- They are not waiting for reform – they are designing their own learning pathways – outside the system

# Institution-Level Participation

- Reimagine their role in SRC's
- Link to Academic Boards or Councils
- Are they truly influencing decisions?
- **Power Moment:** If the system does not create pathways into work... Young people will create their own

# The Problem with Legacy Qualifications

- Generic and theory-heavy
- TVETs produces knowledge – weak occupational identity
- Limited workplace integration – gap between qualification and employability
- Labour market demands competence and experience (structural mismatch)

# The TVET Perception Challenge

- Seen as second choice – skills mismatch
- Weak TVET uptake - lack career guidance
- Limited exposure (economic stagnation)
- Perception shaped by experience

# Reframing TVET Curriculum

- Co-designed with youth
- Integrates real-world challenges – promote ‘learn and earn’ pathways
- Continuous adaptive

# **QCTO Occupational Qualifications**

- Integrates knowledge, practical skills and workplace learning
- Designed by the industry
- Offers direct pathways to employment
- Pathways to livelihoods

# Co-creation Model

- Model applied in curriculum and policy design
  - **Consultation** (Youth in decision-making)
  - **Collaboration** – Learners are central beneficiaries
  - **Co-creation** (socio-constructivism) – Demand and Relevance
- The future of curriculum is not designed in boardrooms – but co-created with youth and validated in the workplace

# Power Moment

- We have not failed because we lack institutions....
- We have failed because we lack integration
- We need direct pathways to employment
- Short, targeted learning (micro-credentials as the future)
- Stackable into qualifications
- Responsive to digital and green economy

# System Transformation

- How do we institutionalise youth voice (engagement pause)?
- Policy level (from programmes to pathways)
- Institution level (from lecturing to facilitation)
- Classroom level (from content to experience)

# Closing

- Youth are co-creators of curriculum
- The system must evolve
- The time to act is now



Thank You