



Education and Workforce Development

Mentoring and Apprenticeship Programs: Global Examples and Recommendations

HEP+ Technical Brief

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Introduction

In Latin America and the Caribbean, many young people lack the skills required for employment; approximately one in five youth ages 15 to 24 are not in school and not working (De Hoyos, 2016). This gap is caused by several factors, one of which is that early school dropout leads to a general lack of skills that hinders one's ability to secure a formal-sector job. A deficit of basic academic skills carries over into adolescence and eventually into the labor market. Employers require some minimal technical competencies, so even those individuals who remain in a traditional education system may face challenges in securing a technical position, or fully understanding which skills are needed in a given position or field. Unemployment among youth is a concern as it contributes to intergenerational persistence of inequality and is linked to crime and violence; failing to address the problem could prevent the region from exploiting an emerging demographic window of opportunity (De Hoyos, 2016). The fundamental challenge in Guatemala is that many youth leave school without developing the minimal technical competencies that employers require. Those that remain in school do not have experience with the real labor market. These gaps need to be addressed in order to provide youth access to employment and improve the labor market.

This technical brief, developed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Health and Education Policy Plus (HEP+) project, features mentoring and apprenticeships as two tools in an education and youth workforce development strategy that can facilitate a young person's journey from education to employment,

with a particular focus on the Guatemalan context. To this end, the brief focuses on:

1. Workforce development systems
2. Mentoring programs
3. Apprenticeship programs
4. Options beyond mentoring and apprenticeships
5. Potential steps forward for Guatemala

Workforce Development Systems

Successful education and youth workforce development programs are built on a solid understanding of the workforce development landscape, particularly the demand-led aspects. Strong institutions and linkages among actors create ecosystems that align workforce development programs with business needs, champion reforms, and boost inclusive economic development. Coordination and connection are the keys to making the ecosystem work.

Many nations exhibit a disconnect between educational systems and private sector needs. In Latin America, about 50 percent of formal firms cannot find candidates with the skills they need, versus 36 percent of firms in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. In Guatemala, this statistic is 46 percent (Manpower Group, 2015). In the United States, 96 percent of university leaders claimed to be "extremely or somewhat confident" that their institutions are preparing students for success in the workforce; meanwhile, only 11 percent of U.S. employers believe that graduates have the

skills and competencies needed for employment (Wilson, 2015).

In Guatemala, the organizations and individuals involved in driving job growth are diverse, crossing economic, educational, age, and civil society boundaries. At the national level, organizations drive competitiveness and export growth strategies (for example, the National Competitiveness Program, or PRONACOM, and the Foundation for the Development of Guatemala, or FUNDESA). At the sectoral level, sector associative bodies coordinate growth strategies, business support programs, and sector-specific workforce initiatives (for example, the Export Association of Guatemala, or AGEXPORT, and the Business Process Outsourcing Association). At the business level, firms may have elements of typical functions associated with workforce development programs such as, “recruit, train, and retain” functions in-house. On the education side, schools, vocational institutes, and out-of-school youth programs provide classroom and hands-on training (for example, the Technical Institute of Training and Productivity, or INTECAP, and the Directorate of Extracurricular Education, or DIGGEX). At the community level, youth services, such as those offered by offered by nongovernmental organizations, foundations, and donor projects, often provide psychosocial support and some initial career guidance. Youth workforce development programs can be a critical catalyst for safe, stable societies and sustainable, broad-based economic growth.

Education, civil society, and private sector actors have many types of work-based learning program tools to bridge the gap from education to employment, such as:

- **Mentorship programs:** designed to mentor individuals based on their backgrounds and expectations (as youth, jobseekers, employees, entrepreneurs, and professionals) at any stage in their careers to help guide career decisions both big and small. These programs can be formal or informal.
- **Apprenticeship programs:** include certified and industry-recognized structured on-the-job training and technical off-the-job training. A contract establishes the rights and responsibilities of both parties.
- **Cooperative education programs:** supervised rotation programs arranged between a school or educational center and an employer (for example, an engineering school and a telecommunications firm), aimed at high school and college students.
- **Internship programs:** geared to students seeking real-world experiences for short periods of time. They are generally unpaid, entry-level positions intended to provide practical skills and the opportunity to learn about an occupation.
- **Career counseling programs:** provide trained counselors with a range of tools to objectively advise a person to make good career decisions, depending on personality and ability.

This brief examines mentorships and apprenticeships as potential tools to bridge the gap from education to employment in Guatemala. The Guatemalan Ministry of Education’s *Plan Estrategico de Educacion 2016-2020* emphasized the importance of implementing these programs to increase coverage of out-of-school education in conjunction with accelerated education programs (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Mentoring Programs

A mentor is a person who teaches, helps, or gives advice to a less experienced person who is often younger than him- or herself (called a mentee). The core aspect of mentoring is spending time together on a regular basis. Mentoring programs are flexible and can be tailored to fit a social need (such as reaching at-risk youth, school youth, or young adults) and tailored to mentor and mentee needs. Time spent together can be structured or unstructured. The format can be one-on-one or in a group; topics can be tied to self-development, education, career searching, professional development, or other topics of mutual interest. An effective mentor understands that his or her role is to be dependable, engaged, authentic, and familiar with the needs of the mentee. A mentor makes an impact by building trust and modeling positive behaviors. The outcome of the time investment is a more confident mentee who is capable of taking ownership of decisions to grow and be successful.

There are many types of mentoring programs that focus on the path to employment, including:

- **At-risk youth programs:** mentor at-risk youth on school, life skills, and career direction (for example, [Boys and Girls Club of America](#)).
- **Career pathway mentoring programs:** mentor students nearing the end of school (or at dropout risk points) to help them to navigate potential next steps such as work, vocational school, or continued education (for example, [Towards Employment](#) and [Year Up](#)).
- **Entrepreneur mentoring programs:** provide strategic and technical mentorship of young entrepreneurs. They connect businesspeople, professionals, and advisors with aspiring entrepreneurs (for example, [Endeavor](#), [Mercy Corps MicroMentor](#), [Mentors International](#), and [Alterna Mentores](#)).
- **Young professional or company mentoring programs:** provide mentorship of young professionals in a specific industry or company (for example, the [World Bank](#)).

Mentoring Roles

The role of the mentor is to listen, help formulate a career plan, provide networking, help navigate, help advocate, provide extra perspectives, identify gaps in knowledge and ways to fill those gaps, encourage progress, and celebrate successes. They provide a trusted alternative to colleagues, supervisors, friends, and family. Mentors sharpen their technical and interpersonal skills, gain new ones, and can form friendships with their mentees.

Mentees dedicate time to their mentor, ask questions, and seek advice. For mentees, the collaborative nature of mentoring develops knowledge, confidence, and interpersonal links.

Mentoring provides an opportunity for learning and development, which can help advance mentees' careers and keep them from feeling stagnant in their roles. The role of a mentoring program is to provide the framework (time, topics, forms, etc.), selection, pairing, tools, evaluation, and support (often financial) to ensure a program is executed effectively.

Factors for Success

Mentoring has proven effective in many regards. In 2008, a World Bank meta-review of 55 evaluations of mentoring programs in the United States showed that mentoring had a significant, measurable impact on the following, across age, gender, and ethnic categories (Cunningham et al., 2008):

- Reducing high-risk behaviors
- Improving academic and educational outcomes
- Enhancing career and employment outcomes

Since a core element of mentoring is a time investment, mentoring programs should provide clarity on mentoring roles and the expectations with respect to the time invested. Some factors that influence program success are whether:

- Mentors and mentees are matched based on skills and development needs
- Clear goals and objectives are outlined
- Minimum time commitments are communicated
- A formal process exists for monitoring the mentor/mentee relationship
- Both parties are held accountable
- Mentoring program links to business strategy and goals

Applying Mentorships in Guatemala

Mentoring can be a powerful and flexible tool, but effective implementation requires a focused objective, programmatic commitment, clear structure, and personal follow-up. The concept of mentorship is new to Guatemala; as such, it will need to target both mentors and mentees to gain traction. Because mentors are volunteers, targeted outreach efforts are needed to seek out mentors for different youth populations. Given the Guatemalan educational context, which includes a high dropout rate, lack of career orientation, and dearth of job search knowledge among youth, some suggestions for successful program implementation are to:

- **Develop mentoring programs targeted at reducing dropout rates** by focusing the target population on youth in school

- **Develop career orientation programs** by engaging industries to articulate demand for skills, training needed, and resources to link potential students with opportunities
- **Develop career pathway mentoring programs** to focus on navigating the desired career path, application process, and next steps to achieve desired goals

The goal of these youth-focused programs is to mentor youth to stay in school, help them understand the market demands, and navigate options for work, university, or vocational programs.

Apprenticeship Programs

An apprenticeship can be defined as a job that includes on-the-job training and off-the-job training to learn a skilled occupation that is certified and recognized by an industry. Apprenticeships are distinctive from other training methods in that:

- The apprentice has a job with structured training
- The apprentice's training plan combines training in the workplace with a professional master
- A written contract of employment exists
- The apprentice takes an assessment to receive a recognized certification

Apprenticeships are often aimed at out-of-school young people around the age of 20 who may be unemployed, have an interest in learning a skill, and may not have the economic ability to afford an academic career (Fazio et al., 2016). Although apprenticeships have demonstrated a positive impact in some countries, they have infrequently been used in Latin America and the Caribbean. Apprenticeships tend not to target vulnerable youth, or youth with the lowest skills base; they offer longer, more intense training—and are therefore costlier—and are co-financed by the private sector (Busso et al., 2017).

In 2016, the Inter-American Development Bank produced a comprehensive assessment of apprenticeships in Latin America and the Caribbean (Fazio et al., 2016). This technical brief draws out specific recommendations

relevant to Guatemala. While it does not recommend developing formal government-funded apprenticeship programs, it does provide some actions that can be taken to develop apprenticeships in Guatemala.

Australia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom have highly evolved formal apprenticeship systems that include government, corporate, union, and educational institution funding, support, and co-governance. While traditional apprenticeships are long and costly, it is possible to adapt the model for shorter, more accessible programs that integrate formal classroom learning with an on-the-job apprenticeship component. Some countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada have adapted pre-apprenticeships as a precursor to apprenticeship programs so that groups from different populations are able to strengthen their basic technical and interpersonal (soft skills) to meet the qualifications of an apprenticeship program. Pre-apprenticeships feature a classroom (or lab), worksite visits, internships, job shadowing, and other, similar activities that provide exposure to the work environment.

Cost-benefit analyses of apprenticeship programs are scarce, but those that have been undertaken demonstrate that a large percentage of training firms can recoup their investments by the end of the training period (Busso et al., 2017). The employer pays the apprentice's wages, which should be lower than or equivalent to those of a regular employee, and other resource costs, such as training for supervisors, training costs, and opportunity costs of experienced workers' time. However, recruitment benefits are associated with an employer's ability to recruit the best apprentices from a pool and the increases in productivity that the apprentice generates over the course of the program (Fazio et al., 2016).

Factors for Success

Given the high level of formality and inter-institutional coordination among multiple stakeholders, key factors of success revolve around aligning programs with market demand, aligning incentives for actors, sharing investments across actors, focusing on quality, and rigorously measuring the return on investment for all. A number of core elements should be followed to achieve successful outcomes:

- Alignment with country development strategies
- Adequate governance arrangements
- High levels of employer engagement
- Appropriate funding and incentive structures
- Robust curriculum design, delivery, and assessment methodologies that are relevant to occupation
- Certification and opportunities for further progression
- Suitable support in the form of apprenticeship career services
- Strong quality assurance mechanisms for delivery of the apprenticeship program that must take into account all of the aforementioned core elements and be highly aligned with countries' skills development systems (Busso et al., 2017)

In addition, to achieve a higher return on investment, programs that target youth who have already acquired advanced soft and basic skills are often more effective (a challenge in Latin America and the Caribbean).

Examples of International Apprenticeship Systems

The **German system**, characterized by a very stratified, state-paid education system and heavily regulated and unionized labor markets, is often touted as one of the global leaders in apprenticeships. Most apprenticeships last approximately three years and mix company-based with in-school training or consist solely of school-based training with a work placement. Both types of programs provide a nationally recognized qualification. About 60 percent of young people participate in apprenticeships in Germany (Jacobs, 2017).

The **U.S. system**, characterized by company-led partnerships with educational institutions and community colleges, has historically been underused, with an annual average of active apprentices under 500,000 for the last 20 years. As of 2017, there were approximately 534,000 registered apprenticeships (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018).

The **Mexican system** has recently demonstrated greater momentum in promoting apprenticeships. The main organization responsible for vocational

education and training in Mexico is CONALEP (Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica). Since the early 1990s, Swiss-, German-, and Austrian-linked programs have been collaborating with auto parts and industrial firms to conduct apprenticeship programs in Mexico.

Applying Apprenticeships in Guatemala

Latin America is keen to boost apprenticeships to drive steady employment, but many challenges confront the traditional model. Employers are often not willing to finance basic and soft skills remediation, small- and medium-sized enterprises are unable to absorb the high costs of participation that larger employers can absorb, and a lack of transparent information about worker skills and training quality discourages many employers from making the investment. Guatemala faces challenges in developing apprenticeships due to the lack of architectural elements in an apprenticeship system. With political will and a committed private sector, there are practical steps that Guatemala can take to bolster an apprenticeship system.

Given the challenges, complexity, and scale, a formal, multiparty, long-term apprenticeship system may not be the most effective system in an environment with scarce resources. Guatemala may want to focus on less formal, systemic models for bridging employment—such as internships and mentoring with an emphasis on career counseling (described next) or pre-apprenticeships as described previously. If momentum for paid-formal apprenticeships with certification builds, then steps can be taken to establish apprenticeships.

Beyond Mentoring and Apprenticeships

Practical options other than mentoring and apprenticeships exist for Guatemala, such as internships. An internship is an opportunity for experiential learning outside the classroom to prepare youth to work in a technical or professional environment, though with a shorter timeline (1-3 months) than an apprenticeship. Considering the formality of apprenticeships, internships can be an option for youth who need to work, earn money, and learn new skills

rapidly. Furthermore, the private sector may not be ready to absorb a formal apprenticeship program but could quickly adapt a less formal internship program. Internships can be paid or provide a stipend and can also be combined with a certification program. Evidence of several successful workforce development programs that include internships are highlighted next from Macedonia, Bulgaria, and El Salvador.

Macedonia sought to correct its disconnect between supply and demand of labor through several initiatives. A national internship and job placement program was established as a platform for work-based and experiential learning for recent graduates and youth to transform internships into full-time jobs. The program, MyCareer, centers around a job placement portal that brings together jobseekers, students, employers, and career counselors. Students use the portal to get a foot in the door and strengthen professional development while employers consider it a cost-effective way to recruit and screen candidates. MyCareer provides training for students and jobseekers to write resumes and cover letters, prepare for interviews, and develop communication and soft skills for the work environment. In addition to MyCareer, the national program supported industry-led education programs to build a pipeline of workers with specific skills needed for businesses within a given sector, facilitated through partnerships between local businesses and technical and vocational schools. These programs cost little while providing a knowledge transfer that led to internship placements and full-time jobs for well-performing students. Key to these initiatives was a career development process with the Global Career Development Facilitator certification that targeted the private sector and educational institutions to provide counseling services. Lastly, the program sought to encourage stakeholder dialogue and coordination to provide an integrated, systematic approach to workforce competitiveness.

Several components of USAID's **Bulgaria** Labor Market Project (LMP) provide cost-effective best practices that could be relevant to the Guatemalan context. One activity sought to identify employers' needs through an interview program of over 150 companies in a range of sectors and industries that promised growth

potential in Bulgaria. The interview program provided insight into employer demand and highlighted opportunities for new investment and employment creation. As a result, USAID sought pilot programs to better prepare the labor force to meet the needs of a changing economy and Bulgaria responded with training certification programs to meet the needs of employers in the growing tourism and apparel industries. Additionally, Bulgaria instituted a national internship program for university students to receive practical work experience through an online platform connecting internship seekers with employers. This initiative included helping universities to open career development centers, training staff using internationally recognized methodologies for training career counselors, drafting guidance for employers and universities on internship program development, organizing internship and career fairs, and promoting academic credit for internships. To address youth not attending university, the Ministry of Education partnered with LMP to build capacity for career counseling at secondary and vocational schools and launched a website to assist Bulgarian youth to make informed career decisions. A key lesson learned from the LMP is that the failure of education and training institutions to adequately equip labor market participants with necessary skills is a critical structural constraint to economic growth. Sustained employment creation and productivity growth requires continuous improvement of skills.

El Salvador provides several program examples that could be valuable for Guatemala. The program's main principles were to ensure that interventions were market-led and activities were alliance-based to ensure local buy-in and sustainability, promote access to information (on supply and demand in the market, efficacy of training programs, and opportunities), build sustainable platforms for communication and collaboration, and utilize strategic communications, particularly Facebook. The program components were 1) promote occupational skills, standards, and competency certifications by identifying supply gaps in occupational skills and competencies and designing competency-based training and certification programs to address these gaps, 2) expand consumer-based employment

reporting and career counseling/placement services for vulnerable youth and persons with disabilities, 3) improve the labor market information system (for example, English for Work and IT certifications for professionals, teachers, and students), and 4) link technical and vocational training with the needs of the business community through alliance building with the private sector. Furthermore, the program teamed up with a private sector firm to develop an online national internship program for university students, develop a certification program for career counselors, redesign the Internet portal for job matching, and create an online vocational tool for youth. Lastly, the program aimed to 5) build local capacity by transferring best practices to stakeholders in the workforce development system. The results were impressive. For example:

- 14,622 people found employment in new or improved jobs
- 21 alliances were created between public, private, and non-profit stakeholders
- 1,047 internships were completed

Potential Steps Forward for Guatemala

Guatemala is in a position to develop programs to bridge the gap between school and work at low cost. Regardless of the type of program tool, bridging the gap between private and public/nongovernmental sectors is needed. The following are some steps that Guatemala can take to highlight and improve the education-to-work path for stakeholders.

1. **Align programs with existing country development strategies.** Currently, government actors, associations, businesses, and civil society groups are working to grow targeted sectors. PRONACOM has focused its strategy on the “11-11-9” framework (11 clusters, 11 priorities, 9 territories) that forms the basis for the *National Competitiveness Policy 2018-2032*. Identification of thematic working groups is necessary to avoid duplication of efforts and build coordination and consensus. Furthermore, the target population needs to be considered—if the focus is vulnerable youth, the best solutions are those that are integral and comprehensive, covering a range of issues that youth face.
2. **Map skills needed and existing programs for priority sectors.** The Foundation for the Development of Guatemala has undertaken an effort to map talent needs (FUNDESA, 2017). This can be augmented with existing data on firms (such as number of firms, number of employees, growth rates, and types of roles). It is essential that specific companies are aligned with specific needs to effectively structure a program.
3. **Engage the private sector as a resource for workforce development solutions.** Working with the private sector to validate strategies, priorities, needs, and resources through the establishment of skills councils, employer consultations, and roundtables is needed. Engagement can take place at the company, sector, or platform level. Gaps and appropriate responses (such as career orientation, certifications, mentoring, internships, or apprenticeships) can be identified and addressed. An active role by employers is vital to ensure that training and certification programs are demand-driven to address the real skillsets that are needed in the labor market.
4. **Use public-academic-private platforms to focus on private sector refinement and adoption of programs.** The private sector, both formal and informal, employs the majority of Guatemala’s workforce. Aligning stakeholder interests and showing the feasibility and low cost of collaborative efforts to revise curricula, transfer knowledge to trainers, and provide venues for work-based learning at local and sector levels increases the likelihood that public-private partnerships can take place. Platforms like the National System of Labor Training (or SINAFOL) can focus on private sector adoption of programs and the Directorate of Extracurricular Education could work with a private sector task force to frame best use of resources, or co-design programs that train workforce-ready employees and micro-entrepreneurs.
5. **Complement mentoring and apprenticeship programs with career**

counseling. Historically, public and private sectors have worked independently, thus the process of establishing mentoring and apprenticeship programs will take time to build bridges between these sectors. Incorporating trained, or certified, career counselors is a necessary complement that carries low risk and low costs. Career counselors can provide jobseekers with information about the labor market and where they may best fit in within it. Career counseling can take place in-person or online.

- 6. Promote access to information and resources.** Lack of information is an obstacle for a functional workforce program. It is important to inform jobseekers and job suppliers about the efficacy of training programs, job opportunities available, job placement offices, and how to access these resources. Considerations such as monitoring and data management systems, information portals, and social media can positively contribute to access to information.

Guatemala faces a challenge in that many youth leave school without developing the minimal technical competencies that employers require and those youth that remain in school do not have real world experience. Investments in workforce development systems that are aligned with the needs of employers can help individuals achieve their potential and benefit the labor market as a whole. Mentorships and apprenticeships, as well as less formal options such as internships, are potential tools to bridge the path from education to employment in Guatemala.

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CONTACT US

Health Policy Plus
1331 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20004
www.healthpolicyplus.com
policyinfo@thepalladiumgroup.com

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