

IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE IYF PASSPORT TO SUCCESS LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM

Final Impact Evaluation Report EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is a global challenge that is particularly relevant to the South African labour market. The National Development Plan highlights concerns surrounding youth unemployment in the South African economy ¹ and recent data indicates that youth unemployment is significantly higher than the already high overall unemployment rate.

According to the Q1: 2019 Quarterly Labour Force Survey, the official unemployment rate for the full working population as at March 2019 was 27.6 %, while the unemployment rate for individuals aged 15-24 at the same point in time was 55.2% and the unemployment rate for individuals aged 25-34 was 34.2%. ²

PASSPORT TO **SUCCESS**

The International Youth Foundation is dedicated to improving youth economic opportunities. In their most recent country strategy for South Africa, IYF committed to strengthening learnerships and internships to help bridge the skills gap between young people's abilities and the competencies that employers seek. Their plan is to leverage existing learnership systems, such as those run through industry partners and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, and strengthen them by integrating their Passport to Success® (PTS) life skills curriculum to improve learnership completion rates and post-learnership employment rates.

IYF has piloted this strategy in partnership with ProServ South Africa, an EOH subsidiary, by integrating the PTS curriculum into the EOH Youth Job Creation Initiative.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AS AT MARCH 2019

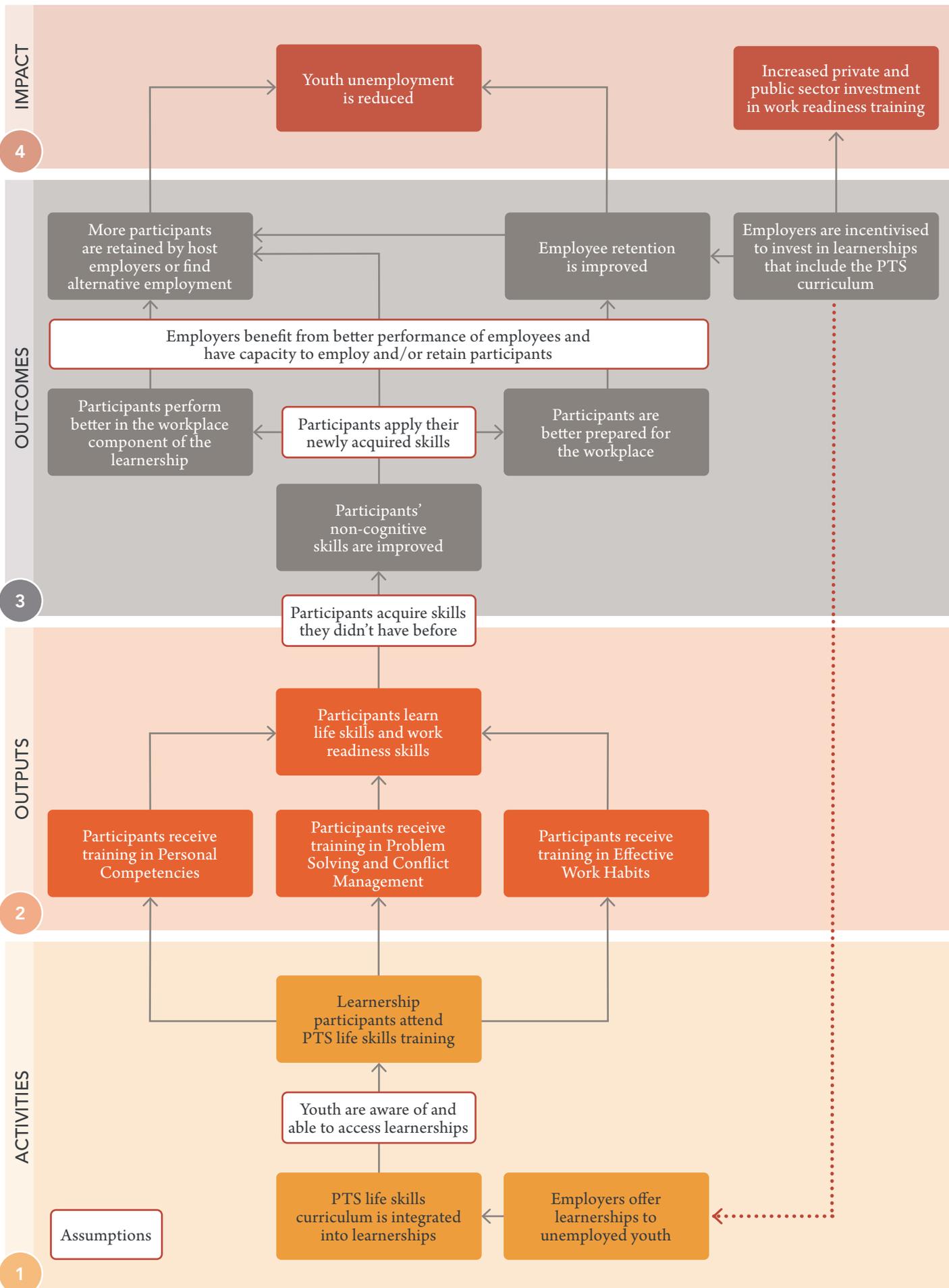


EOH, a large South African-headquartered, multi-national firm that provides end-to-end IT and organisational solutions, launched the Youth Job Creation Initiative in 2012, with the aim of addressing youth unemployment in South Africa. The EOH Youth Job Creation Initiative leverages EOH's network of business partners, government partners and customers to provide learnerships through which participating youth receive structured workplace experience, coupled with EOH or partner-delivered classroom-based occupational training. These learnerships are typically one year in duration, and are publicly accredited programmes registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). At the end of the learnerships, the learners not only have one year of work experience but also receive an occupational qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). By 2020, EOH's Youth Job Creation Initiative aims to transition 50 000 unemployed youth into jobs.

1 National Planning Commission. (2012). National Development Plan 2030: Our future – make it work. Pretoria, SA: The Presidency.
 Retrieved from <https://www.poa.gov.za/news/Documents/NPC%20National%20Development%20Plan%20Vision%202030%20lo-res.pdf>
 2 Statistics South Africa. (2019). Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Quarter 1: 2019. Pretoria, SA: Government Printer.

The figure below is a graphical depiction of the logic underlying the integration of PTS into the EOH Youth Job Creation Initiative and how this leads to a reduction in youth unemployment.

FIGURE 1: Theory of Change for PTS integration



This summary document presents the findings from the impact evaluation, which took place over three years, between June 2016 and April 2019, with three separate cohorts of learners.

IMPACT EVALUATION

Genesis Analytics was appointed by IYF to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation of the PTS life skills curriculum provided to learners participating in the EOH Youth Job Creation Initiative. The purpose of this evaluation was to generate evidence around the impact of PTS integration for both businesses and the participating youth. This evidence serves to address the significant knowledge gap that exists with respect to life skills training/non-cognitive skills development and employment outcomes for youth.

EVALUATION RESULTS

OVERALL SATISFACTION

In terms of overall satisfaction with the intervention, 91% of learners were either highly satisfied (79%) or satisfied (12%) with the PTS training. Furthermore, workplace readiness training was ranked as the most useful component of their learnerships.



NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS

The evaluation finds that receiving the PTS life skills curriculum as part of the pre-learnership work readiness training has had a positive impact on learners' non-cognitive skills, across many categories, as indicated by the figures below. Each of these figures depicts the average differences in scores for particular statements in various non-cognitive skills categories, for both the group that received PTS training and the counterfactual scenario where no PTS training was offered. The red block represents the difference between the two groups post-intervention. See more about these scores in Box 1.



EMPLOYMENT

Most importantly, PTS resulted in youth being approximately 20% more likely to be employed 6 months post-learnership, suggesting that the PTS curriculum is preparing learners to perform better in the workplace. While we were not able to receive data directly from employers, the reported data from the learners implies that PTS leads to improved retention rates.



CONCLUSION

Given the above, this evaluation concludes that the PTS life skills curriculum has positively affected the non-cognitive skills and employment outcomes of participating youth, and should be further integrated into existing learnership systems in South Africa, such as those run through industry partners and TVET colleges to improve learnership completion rates and post-learnership employment rates.

BOX 1

Learners were posed a series of statements to which they were required to answer using a four-point rating scale response. For example, to the statement “I stand up for what I think is right, even if my friends disagree”, learners would have had to respond with “strongly agree”, “agree”, “disagree” or “strongly disagree”. Value judgements were applied to each of the statements whereby higher ‘scores’ were given to those responses that were more ‘preferable’ in terms of desired behaviour. Expanding on the example above, this means that a learner would have scored a four (4) if they selected “strongly agree” and a one (1) if they selected “strongly disagree”. The opposite ranking was applied to negatively-worded statements where the preferable response would be “strongly disagree”. Thus, increases in scores suggest an improvement in non-cognitive skills.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The impact evaluation relied on a method known as “Difference-in-difference” (DID) to determine the impact of the PTS life skills integration on learners’ non-cognitive skills. This approach compares the outcomes over time for those who received the PTS training to those who did not.

The sample was therefore divided into two groups, that consisted of the following individuals:

- **Treatment Group (T):** Youth participating in learnerships, into which the PTS life skills curriculum was integrated.
- **Comparison Group (C):** Youth participating in learnerships that did not include the PTS life skills curriculum.

The comparison group serves as the ‘counterfactual scenario’ and aims to represent what would have happened in the absence of receiving PTS. The crucial condition underlying the DID method is that the ‘parallel trend assumption’ holds; that is, in the absence of the intervention, the treatment and comparison groups would have changed in the same manner and followed parallel trends – had identical trajectories – over the impact evaluation period. The key weakness of the DID method is thus when something other than the assigned ‘treatment’ changes in one group and not the other, causing one group to behave differently for an entirely independent reason that has not been accounted for in the design of the experiment. This constitutes a violation of the parallel trend assumption, and would confound the estimates of the DID analysis. The left-hand figure in Figure 2 illustrates the parallel trend assumption, while the right-hand figure in Figure 2 graphically illustrates how, in theory, the DID method estimates the attributable impact of the treatment.

FIGURE 2: Difference-in-difference estimation

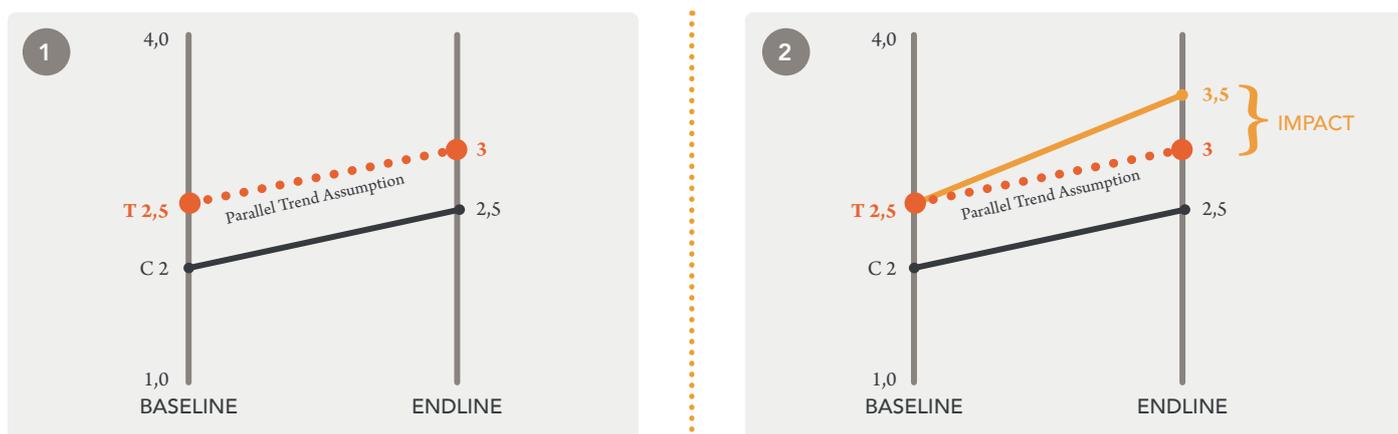


TABLE 1: Cohort population and sample sizes by survey and group

COHORT	POPULATION (N)		BASELINE (n)				ENDLINE (n)				EX-POST (n)			
	T	C	T	%N	C	%N	T	%N	C	%N	T	%N	C	%N
Cohort 1	146	62	136	93%	40	65%	52	36%	23	37%	-	-	-	-
Cohort 2	119	250	113	95%	204	82%	85	71%	138	55%	96	81%	181	72%
Cohort 3	150	100	149	99%	98	98%	99	66%	61	61%	106	71%	70	70%
TOTAL	415	412	398	96%	342	83%	236	57%	222	54%	202	75%	251	72%

Note: %N is the response rate relative to the total population of the learners.

For the Ex-post survey, %N totals are relative to the total population of cohort 2 and cohort 3 learners only.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample for this evaluation was divided into three separate cohorts, each of which was analysed separately. Due to challenges experienced with cohort 1 and cohort 2, discussed in Table 2, the results from these analyses were statistically unreliable. The most accurate estimates for the impact of PTS on the non-cognitive skills and employment outcomes of learners are those that arise from the cohort 3 analysis. The conclusions above are founded on the basis of these estimates.

TABLE 2: Challenges and limitations

 CHALLENGE	 STUDY LIMITATION
<p>The cohort 1 comparison group was very small at baseline (pre intervention). Furthermore, attrition (the inability to locate study participants after a period of time) was particularly bad for cohort 1, which experienced a 57% attrition rate between baseline and endline (post-intervention).</p>	<p>Having such a small comparison group for cohort 1 lowered the statistical power of that analysis, and meant that the evaluation team was unable to do a DID analysis for cohort 1. The evaluation team was therefore unable to make statistically meaningful conclusions about the impact of PTS for this cohort 1.</p>
<p>Cohort 2 comprised a number of different learnership groups which varied significantly in terms of size, start date, employer type, nature of work and sector. Furthermore, some of the cohort 2 employers were bound by their contracts and/or Skills Education Training Authority (SETA) requirements to hire 70% of their learners on completion of the learnerships.</p>	<p>The presence of variation in the learnership groups means that differences between the host employers, rather than the presence of PTS, could influence the outcomes for the individual beneficiary. In effect, this means that the parallel trend assumption for cohort 2 was likely compromised, which means that the DID results for cohort 2 unreliable. Furthermore, the implication of this SETA requirement is that there is an external factor determining whether or not particular individuals are hired, which would interfere with the ability to accurately estimate the effect of receiving PTS on employment outcomes for cohort 2.</p>
<p>The evaluation team faced significant challenges in extracting return on investment information from an employer perspective. Employers and mentors were either unresponsive or unwilling to share data on learners once they were permanently employed at worksites, or did not know who the relevant contact at the host employer was.</p>	<p>The lack of employer data meant that it was not possible to conduct a return on investment analysis for those that invested in the PTS curriculum as part of the learnership. To mitigate the lack of employer data, an ex-post survey was introduced 6 months after learnerships were completed to gather employment and retention data from the learners, which is self-reported.</p>
<p>Aligned to the unresponsiveness described above, the evaluation team also struggled to gather qualitative data from employers or mentors to complement the quantitative analysis, and so the information reported in this report is predominantly quantitative.</p>	<p>The lack of qualitative data did not substantially limit the study. This data was going to be used to understand the extent to which the learners were meeting the expectations of the employers and to understand any challenges experienced by the learners during their learnerships. While this would have provided depth to the analysis that is not possible in a purely quantitative study, it does not greatly limit the analysis, which was always planned to be predominantly quantitative.</p>

WRITTEN AND PREPARED BY