

RESEARCH PAPER BY
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PANEL OVERVIEW

GIVE ME A JOB!

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UNESCO estimates that less than 5 per cent of Africans enrol in formal technical or vocational training programmes – yet there is a huge deficit in qualified local labour across all sectors. As a result, skilled foreigners have to be recruited, or companies have to reassess their operations – both of which stunt Africa's growth. Why is there such a disconnect? And is it the government's responsibility to generate these jobs?

Regional challenges

In 2013 Africa's economy grew by 4% and Sub-Saharan Africa grew by 5%, and is projected to continue growing over the next decade (*OECD, 2014*). Much of this growth is fueled by agriculture and foreign direct investment in high skilled enterprises. However, local workers remain excluded from the high skilled labor market.

Underemployment and unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa is higher than most regions of the developing world. The International Labor Organization (ILO) reports that labor markets in developing countries are challenged by an oversupply of labor, a scarcity of capital and a combination of traditional and "modern" economies (*ILO, 2013*). Women and girls, people with disabilities, and youth, in particular, are marginalized. Sub-Saharan Africa's rapidly growing population of individuals aged 15-24 face even greater employment challenges than their counterparts in other developing countries. In 2013 the global youth unemployment rate was estimated at 12.6% (*ILO, 2013*). In sub-Saharan Africa, youth unemployment was almost 20% (*OECD, 2014*). The 2014 [Train My Generation Survey](#) illustrated that youth who were polled cited unemployment as their biggest concern for the future.

ILO attributes high unemployment rates to several factors including skills mismatch, which could either be from over-education or under-education. In sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of Liberia, Malawi and Togo, the skills mismatch is mainly from under-education (*ILO, 2013*).

Under-education may stem from exclusion from technical and vocational programs due to high tuition costs, but also from lack of preparation for these programs because of lower quality education at the elementary and secondary level. UNESCO reports that Africa's pupil/teacher ratio at the elementary school level is well above most other regions, with 42:1 in 2012, compared to the global pupil/teacher ratio at 24:1 in 2012 (*ILO, 2013*). Gender gaps in primary and secondary education also create a disadvantage for females in the labor force. Governments should continue to improve education at the elementary and secondary level and also invest in more public and alternative vocational and training programs.

Organizations like the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) advocate for more inclusive models of technical and vocational programs. A key characteristic of a more inclusive model is its emphasis on easing the transition from training to employment. Shifting from costly formal technical and vocational programs to informal, lower cost development programs including apprenticeships, distance learning, and Internet trainings would also be non-discriminatory with regard to gender, financial status and age (*Afeti, George, 2015*).

Africa has already leapfrogged other continents in terms of mobile phone use, which would facilitate online vocational training programs and other Internet solutions. According to the World Bank, the mobile subscription rate in 2012 sub-Saharan Africa was 650 million (*World Bank, 2012*). ICTs have endless potential as a development solution. Initiatives like the crisis mapping application Ushahidi, and Esoko for agricultural market information services for example, have undoubtedly increased government transparency and improved standards of living. Use of technology can help improve education at all levels and also help problems in the labor market. The ICT can be scaled to address unemployment problems by improving search frictions between employers and urban job seekers. More importantly, mobile job search sites and job networking sites can also match job seekers with training and apprenticeship programs. The government could also use the Internet to aggregate data on employment figures.

Solution/Recommendations From OECD and African Development Bank

- Diversifying the economy through agriculture and implementing programs at the grassroots level are other methods for including marginalized groups like youth and women in the labor force. The African Development Bank forecasts that agriculture in Africa not only has the potential for combatting food insecurity, but also for driving growth and filling employment gaps (*African Development Bank*)
- Improving agricultural value chains can transform communities and create new jobs for women, youth and other marginalized groups (*OECD, 2014*)
- Apprenticeship programs and vocational development programs can also target the agricultural sector by preparing students for green jobs, agri-business and marketing.
- Measurement of unemployment statistics can help drive governments to improve their

- performance in providing more services and trainings for job seekers (*McArthur, John, The Brookings Institution, 2014*)
- Governments should place emphasis on the informal sector as a potential for job growth by creating market enhancing programs enabling disadvantaged youth to access training (*World Bank, 2014*)
 - Policymakers should develop new skills training programs for workers from sectors that may eventually be eliminated through a green economy, and for workers who wish to transition into new green jobs (*ILO, 2011*)
 - Policymakers should help upgrade informal apprenticeships by addressing their strengths and weaknesses and creating links with formal training centers (*ILO, 2009*)
 - The public and the private sector should invest in education programs that build skills that could eventually be useful in the labor force. In particular the government should provide incentives for the private sector and formulate a private investment policy (*UNDP, 2014*)
 - Governments should emphasize the informal sector as a potential for job growth by creating market enhancing programs enabling disadvantaged youth to access training (*World Bank, 2014*)

Forum Flashback:

NYFA 14: Gabon's Minister of National Education and Training, Leon Nzouba, said that job creation had to start with education with lower class sizes and improved teacher trainings. Samir Benmakhlouf, Microsoft's Country Manager for Morocco, said that Africa should develop its services and knowledge economy by increasing education budgets. More importantly, he felt that teachers needed more training to incorporate educational technologies into the classroom. General Director of Morocco's Office of Vocational Training and Employment Promotion, Larbi Bencheikh, emphasized the need to increase the number of vocational and training programs and matching graduates of these programs with jobs.

The Taskforce on Higher Education and Vocational Training, moderated by Jon Foster-Pedley, Dean of the Henley Business School, South Africa, recommended that current curricula should be reassessed, and educational awareness campaigns should be developed. The taskforce also proposed that vocational training should be promoted and there should be more investment in the educational infrastructure.

Further reading:

Most African leaders are older than their country's median age. How can they better engage a burgeoning youth population? <http://qz.com/420620/africas-leaders-have-an-age-problem/>

Financial Times finds that skills mismatch drives unemployment in South Africa
<http://on.ft.com/1R4rt0A>

The Guardian reports shortage of lecturers taking a toll on higher education in Kenya.
<http://gu.com/p/4b2zx/stw>.

A STEM education may be the key to the future for young Africans, and private partnerships should help facilitate more programs. <http://qz.com/427761>

Forbes reports SAPAfrica amongst private companies addressing skills mismatch in Africa.
<http://onforb.es/1dbaV4f>

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