



WHAT DRIVES YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND WHAT INTERVENTIONS HELP?

A Systematic Overview of the Evidence and a Theory of Change

Executive Summary

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The continued high rates of youth unemployment in South Africa present a serious risk to the promotion of an inclusive economy and society. We have assessed existing national evidence about a) the drivers¹ of youth unemployment; b) the policies and interventions that have sought to address it; and c) what interventions exist and work to tackle the challenge. Based on an assessment of 1 294 research papers, 376 government documents and articles, and 2 759 programme descriptions and evaluations spanning the period 1990–2016², four interconnected strategies emerged as critical levers to ensure that young people are not left behind.

Why young people?

The youth unemployment statistics show that, when discouraged work seekers³ are included, over half of young people aged 15–34 years are presently unemployed in South Africa [1]. This figure has not declined significantly since 2009. While many of the same labour market factors that affect older workers are applicable to young people, the latter face additional barriers that are particular to them. These barriers exist on both the demand⁴ and supply side of the labour market, leading to lower economic participation rates with long-term negative consequences for their employability and well-being. Importantly, the nature of youth unemployment is such that it continues to affect African and female youth most, and is highest for those living in rural areas, or in urban townships or informal settlements. Failure to address this

challenge will therefore reinforce and worsen racial, income, spatial and gender inequalities. It is also expected to continue the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Rationale and aim of the study

Despite significant policy attention and research on youth unemployment since the 1990s, knowledge and evidence from practice remain fragmented. There is little ‘cross-pollination’ of knowledge between the academic disciplines, including evidence of what interventions work, to inform policy and practice in a comprehensive way [2]. This fragmentation is also evident in labour market policies that address either demand or supply side interventions, which may partly explain the lack of progress in addressing youth unemployment.

This cross-disciplinary and integrated systematic overview of the drivers of youth unemployment, alongside an assessment of policies and interventions that have aimed to address the challenge, attempts to address this knowledge gap. Specifically, the study assesses the alignment between national policies and programmes with the identified drivers of youth unemployment. It also identifies the evidence of what works in practice. Based on this gap analysis and the research on available evidence-based practices, a theory of change (TOC) to address youth unemployment in South Africa is devised. The findings and recommendations set out below, including the TOC, address labour market,

1 The term ‘drivers’ refers to the factors that contribute to youth unemployment based on the evidence reviewed in this study.

2 For a complete description of the methodology followed, please see the the full report on the study.

3 Discouraged work seekers are included in identifying unemployed youth as this is an increasing trend in South Africa.

4 The demand side of the labour market refers to the employers’ requirements and behaviour as well as to factors that affect job creation. Supply side of the labour market refers to the features and behaviours of those looking for work.

education and skills, and youth-specific policies, as well as macro- and micro-level factors that underlie youth unemployment in South Africa.

Key findings

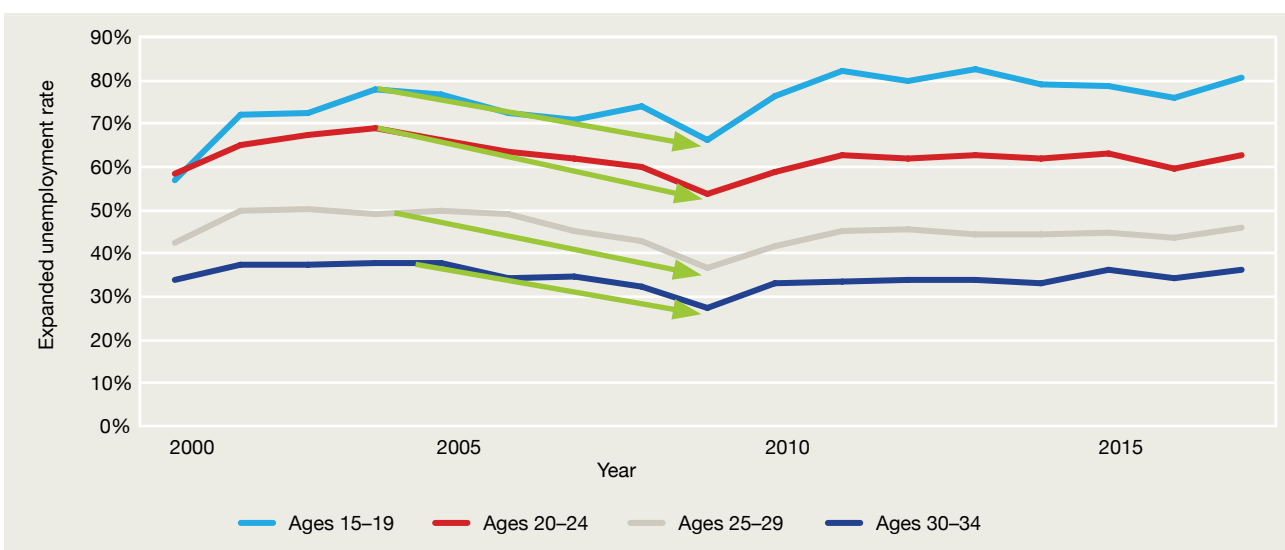
An analysis of youth unemployment rates over time (see Figure 1) shows that youth unemployment declined in the period prior to 2009. The period 2004–2008 was also one of economic growth in South Africa. Our analysis reveals that the decline in youth unemployment was due to the absorption of young workers into the labour market. Youth unemployment rises again from 2010–2015 for all age groups although it is highest among those 15–19 years and 20–24 years old. Data also show that since 2008, there is an increasing trend towards discouragement in work seeking where young people give up job searches in a context of high unemployment [3]. However, the larger increase in labour market participation in general, and increased participation of youth in particular (despite increases in discouragement in more recent years), has meant increasing unemployment and youth unemployment levels, the reasons for which are outlined below.

Economic growth that creates jobs in a diverse set of sectors for a diverse set of skills is therefore a critical factor in shifting the youth unemployment challenge. However, our findings on both macro- and

micro-level drivers and on policy implementation challenges show that economic growth on its own is insufficient to address youth unemployment. Five key barriers remain that undermine youth labour market participation.

1. **There is a lack of integrated policy design and implementation.** This applies to both the high level national policies that have aimed to address core issues such as education and skills shortages, global competition, and economic growth, as well as the youth-specific policies that could be expected to facilitate coherence and transversal implementation with a central focus on youth well-being. Instead, the plethora of departments and agencies across national, provincial and local governments tasked with addressing different aspects of youth employment, including skills development, are not well coordinated. This leads to fragmentation and a lack of efficient and effective cross-sectoral implementation. In addition, weak accountability mechanisms for cross-sectoral policy implementation remain a significant deficit in governance.
2. **A large proportion of young people, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds, continue to face poor educational outcomes, specifically in basic numeracy and literacy.** These are, however, critical basic skills required by employers.

FIGURE 1: Expanded unemployment rate by age group, 2000–2016



(Source data for 2000 – 2007: Statistics South Africa, Labour Force Survey 2nd half of the year. Source data for 2008 – 2016: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Data for Quarter 3. [4-20]. Analysis conducted by Zoheb Khan.)



Youth employability is further compromised by a fragmented education system that remains particularly difficult to navigate for the country's poorest youth. It is marked by high drop-out rates, and continues to struggle to provide young people with relevant technical and workplace-related soft skills.⁵ Consequently, young people are poorly equipped to compete in a competitive labour market requiring high skill levels.

3. **There is some evidence suggesting that employers are risk-averse, particularly when it comes to hiring young people.** This seems to be influenced largely by a distrust in the quality of education offered both at the school and post-school levels and results in the inflation of requirements – even for entry-level jobs.
4. **Persistence of individual and household level barriers keep young people from poor households locked out of the labour market.** These barriers include geographical isolation,

the associated cost of work seeking, limited access to information, a lack of work-seeker support, and low levels of social capital.

5. **Currently, 'matching'⁶ processes that can effectively connect young work seekers and employers in the labour market are inefficient,** and intermediary⁷ support that can facilitate better matching is inadequate.

The above findings emerged from the assessment of drivers at both the macro and micro levels as well as the policy design and implementation challenges. These factors are further elaborated on below.

Youth unemployment at the macro level

The macro-level analysis engages with high-level factors such as the ways in which the economy shapes labour market outcomes for youth; the skills training landscape; the policy environment; and how large-scale national interventions have responded to the challenge.

5 The issue of low educational outcomes and high drop-out rates is in itself a complex and multifaceted one. The details of those dynamics need to be understood to begin to efficiently shift the situation in the educational system. However, understanding all those details fell outside of the scope of this particular study. Brief overviews can be found in Spaul (2015) and Branson et al (2015).

6 An efficient labour market matches the most suitable work seeker with the best fit for the available job. Skills, experience and qualifications are used as assessment criteria for suitability for a position. High levels of inefficiency in this process lead to higher turnover of staff. It may also lead to many qualified individuals being overlooked for available jobs. In South Africa, there are few reliable 'markers' of a work seeker's suitability for the job, particularly for first-time work seekers. This is partly due to distrust of the education system. These processes have resulted in higher-level requirements for entry-level jobs as well as an over-reliance on individuals' social networks of referral. These processes work against young people's access to the labour market.

7 Intermediary support refers to interventions and systems that better connect employers and work seekers so that matching of available work seekers to jobs can occur more efficiently.

The evidence shows that:

- Young people were worst affected by the global economic downturn that started in 2008. [21]
- Post apartheid, the economy has shifted from one that was mainly driven by primary (mining and agriculture) and secondary (manufacturing and industry) sectors to one with a stronger tertiary sector (financial and other services) [22-34]. Jobs in this tertiary sector require different, higher levels of skill.
- Existing policies and policy development over time are grounded in a sound understanding of these changes and challenges. The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa, the National Growth Path, The National Skills Development Strategy, the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition, and the National Development Plan all emphasise the need for education and training alongside labour-absorbing growth. In turn, the various skills development and education policies outline how to achieve the requisite training system.
- However, over time there has been a shifting emphasis on which of the inter-related challenges is primary, while the absence of truly coordinating governmental bodies has resulted in a) a lack of understanding about what the critical policy focus would be, b) a lack of coordination between the various line departments that are responsible for each of the challenges individually, c) limited implementation capacity, and d) a lack of accountability.
- The significant failures of implementation have resulted in a young workforce that is ill-prepared to compete in an economy that demands higher levels of skills and will continue to do so in the age of the 'knowledge economy'.
- The existing evidence consistently shows that higher levels of education lead to better chances of employment and income [22; 28; 33; 34; 35-47]; but a large proportion of South African youth continue to have low levels of education and low levels of fundamental skills (or basic numeracy and literacy) as well as technical skills⁸ to make

them employable in the labour market.

- This educational deficit and the skills mismatch between the demand and supply side of the labour market contribute to the high rates of unemployment in general, and of youth unemployment in particular.
- The South African labour market is inefficient. This means that there are inefficiencies in how employers and work seekers connect and assess for fit. This is partly explained by the fact that there is little investment in employment support or intermediary services [48].

There have been large-scale national programmes that have sought to address the above challenges, but gaps remain. The evidence about the effectiveness of these strategies are summarised below:

- There are currently few interventions to manage the shift in the economic trajectory. Labour retention or job-creating interventions that would retain employment (and employability) for those with low skills levels, beyond the public work programme, are needed.
- Industrial development zones were intended to promote jobs in the manufacturing sector but evidence shows that these have been woefully inadequate in creating jobs, despite very high levels of investment [49, 50].
- The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the Community Works Programme (CWP) are two programmes that have succeeded in absorbing large numbers of young people with low skills levels [51]. Notwithstanding training challenges, these public employment programmes form a critical component of an employment strategy for youth, primarily because they offer some guarantee of work and income and provide a critical connection point with young people as they seek jobs.
- On aggregate, evidence is mixed as to whether there have been gains in jobs for youth as a result of the introduction of the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI) [52-56]. However there is

⁸ Technical skills are those skills that involve cognitive learning and the application of knowledge to perform a specific job or set of jobs. Knowledge of the skills relies on cognitive learning in the classroom or via practical experience. They can be defined, measured and assessed (see Heckman, 2000).



promising evidence on positive effects in small firms [54, 56]. So far, too few interventions or studies have focused on this small business sector but there seems to be scope to work with small firms to enhance their ability to employ youth.

Youth unemployment at the micro level

Micro-level analysis refers to the features and characteristics of both the individual young person and the households they come from (supply side) and of individual firms (demand side). There is a far larger body of evidence focusing on what factors shape employment outcomes on the supply side of the market; far less is known about the effects of firm behaviour. Particularly strong evidence exists to show that:

- The spatial mismatch between where most young people live and where most jobs are located means youth need to spend large amounts of capital on work seeking, yet they simultaneously lack the income to invest in these costs [21, 33, 37, 57].
- Young people without matric are worst affected by unemployment. In addition, most youth leave the education system with very poor numeracy and literacy outcomes [58], yet employers indicate that basic numeracy and literacy levels

are needed even for entry-level jobs [59–61].

- The majority of the employed, including youth, find work through social networks [37; 62–64]. Employers, too, use networks to recruit [22, 34, 65]. Yet, largely due to historical reasons, many poorer young people lack social capital that could be leveraged for access to information about work seeking and job availability. If living with an employed adult would be considered a proxy for such social capital, it is important to note that 42% of South African youth aged 15 to 24 live in households with *no* employed adult, and this proportion increases to well over 70% in some areas of the country. This disadvantage runs primarily along racial and socio-economic lines [66].
- Thus, many young people have limited access to information about how to search for work and what to expect of the labour market. As a consequence, young people's work aspirations in terms of the type of employment that they desire are not in line with their educational outcomes [67, 68].
- The trajectory through school and into the labour market is a missed opportunity to provide them with appropriate guidance and information regarding educational pathways and career options.

- There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that young unemployed people have wage expectations that hinder their job search or acceptance. While some quantitative studies show high reservation wages [69]; qualitative studies point at young people's willingness to work, even for very low wages [70].
- Some studies show the positive effect of young people's earlier work experience on the probability and speed of finding a job [44, 71, 72], yet many young people, especially those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, lack work experience.
- On the micro level, demand side, there is some evidence to suggest that employers are risk-averse [22, 32, 73], particularly with regard to employing first-time entrants into the labour market. They seem to be reluctant to hire young people in the absence of reliable 'signals' or 'flags' about applicants' work experience and skills. This absence of reliable signals and doubts about the quality of the existing education system may lead, for instance, to the requirement of a matric certificate even for entry-level jobs. However, the reluctance may also relate to the perceived quality of education offered by previously 'Black' institutes of higher learning, and the perceived investment needed to train young people 'on the job'.

Most youth employment interventions have sought to address issues at the micro level. Most of these interventions have focused on young people themselves. Far fewer have sought to work with employers. The evidence about their effectiveness shows that:

- Work-integrated learning interventions, such as learnerships and apprenticeships, have positive effects on employment outcomes [74–76], despite some challenges in the quality of training. Reasons posited for this lie in the fact that such interventions offer an opportunity for a prolonged interface between employer and trainee, allowing the employer to assess the work seeker over a period of time.
- Other forms of training such as youth

employability programmes that exist outside of the formal training system do not yet show positive effects on employment outcomes, but they do show small positive effects on work search behaviour and resilience in work search [77–78]. In this way, they act to provide employment support.

- Early evidence shows that interventions that provide employment support can substitute for a lack of social capital and limited information about how to search for work. For instance, low-cost interventions such as encouraging work seekers to get a reference letter [65] have been found to have a positive impact on work search outcomes, probably because a reference letter provides a reliable signal to employers about the work seeker.
- Despite these positive results, the review of interventions shows that work-seeker support interventions are limited. Investment in work-seeker support in South Africa is comparatively low [48] in relation to other developing contexts such as Brazil.
- Preliminary evidence suggests that interventions that combine training and matching of young work seekers with employers, such as the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, have better employment outcomes than interventions that run training only [79].
- One intervention that focuses on employers is impact sourcing – a strategy of engaging with employers to encourage them to employ from pools of work seekers that are normally excluded. There is no evaluation evidence to comment on whether such interventions have been successful.

The above findings point to promising pathways for training as well as the potential of investing in employment support to improve job search outcomes. But it is important to note that such interventions, when successful, likely are placing young people into existing job opportunities. They do not address the need for an aggregate increase in jobs.



Remaining gaps in our knowledge

Despite the extensive body of literature on drivers of, and policies and interventions to address, youth unemployment, there remain significant gaps in our understanding that need to be addressed. A research agenda on youth (un)employment should therefore consider the following:

- Macro-level economic data are not disaggregated for youth. We thus lack understanding of how shifts in the economy affect youth.
- There is a lack of understanding of the way in which the demand side of the labour market works and reacts to an influx of young job seekers, in particular of poor, Black and female job seekers, which in turn limits the formulation of effective policy responses. A clear recommendation arising from this review is the need for high-quality research into firm behaviour and decision-making about employment. This could provide insight into finding ways to overcome the split between demand and supply side labour market interventions.
- Relatedly, the effect of labour market regulations on employer behaviour thus emerges as a gap in our understanding of youth unemployment. The South African labour market is often characterised as having strict labour market regulations that make it more difficult to hire and fire employees. It is assumed that these regulations negatively affect job creation, in particular for young people. However, this assumption is not underpinned by empirical evidence, which limits our understanding of how regulations affect employer behaviour.
- A specific labour market regulation that has been introduced is the National Minimum Wage. Its introduction offers an ideal time to monitor effects on youth employment.
- There is evidence to suggest that employers are unlikely to reach out to previously 'Black' institutes of higher learning for recruitment, or to technical and vocational education and training colleges. However, it is unclear whether this is the case for all types of employers (e.g. large corporations vs. small firms), whether employers really know what the quality of education is at the various institutions, or whether this approach constitutes another possible form of racial discrimination.
- In addition, there are assumptions that discrimination on the basis of race and gender continues to play a role in hiring practices. Especially with regards to race, it is unclear how, and to what extent, discrimination would be related to or interact with perceptions of quality of education accessed by the applicants.

- There is limited information about why gender differences in employment remain and whether the assumption that care burdens account for these differences is supported by empirical evidence.
- Levels of discouragement among youth have steadily increased [3], but there is some evidence to suggest that discouragement is not a static state and that young people change between 'search states' [80]. Each of these changes offers an opportunity for intervention, but more research and consultation are needed to understand what exactly constitutes discouragement, what role mental health and psychosocial factors play, what drives a change in search status, and what forms of communication can best be used to reach youth at various points of their search trajectory.
- Significantly, there is a lack of evidence about the impact of supply side interventions. There is a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation capacity and create awareness about the need to evaluate impact more rigorously. Specific research gaps emerge on the employment outcomes of short-term training programmes. There is need for longitudinal studies or similarly robust techniques to assess the longer-term outcomes of such programmes.

The following recommendations flow from the above findings and discussion.

Recommendations

The findings demonstrate that the issue of youth unemployment is nuanced, with multiple factors interacting to shape the current poor employment outcomes. This means that there is no 'magic bullet' that can significantly change the situation. Rather, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. Clearly, economic growth that creates jobs for a range of skills and in a range of sectors is a critical underlying requirement, but this alone will not address the fact that too many young people from poor backgrounds will continue to be excluded from the labour market. Similarly, political will at the national, provincial and local levels to ensure that the country's basic education system produces work

seekers with excellent numeracy and literacy skills who are able to compete for entry-level positions and/or progress into post-secondary education and training, remains an over-riding priority. The post-secondary education system in itself needs to succeed in retaining sufficient numbers of students and provide them with the necessary and relevant technical skills needed by the labour market. But, on their own, the basic and higher education systems are insufficient to address the challenge.

What is needed is a well-coordinated system and commitment on the part of a range of stakeholders including educators, trainers, employers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and government officials to reducing youth unemployment rates as a primary societal goal – a long-term commitment to a more equal, inclusive society. Buying into the idea of employing and supporting youth should be a socially desirable goal for employers. In addition, it can be perceived as an investment in future human resources that could sustain and grow their business as well as the broader economy. Coordinated multi-stakeholder interventions are needed to empower young people through various skills training options that would equip them with the basic skills required to enter the labour market, whether this means bridging numeracy and literacy gaps, or equipping them with higher-level technical skills. It must involve supporting young people to transition smoothly through education pathways and into the labour market with effective employment support that can substitute for the range of individual and household level deficits inherited from the country's discriminatory past, and which can enhance the efficient selection and placement of work seekers in the labour market. Lastly, high-level accountability systems are needed to monitor cross-sectoral policy implementation, flag the need for timely corrective measures, and evaluate policy outcomes.

Failure to do so will have short- and long-term negative consequences for young people's future employment prospects, income, health and education outcomes and their psychosocial well-being.



Theory of Change

A theory of change (TOC) is a plan of what needs to change in order to achieve an identified outcome or goal. It is an evidence-based planning tool that promotes a particular set of actions to achieve the goal. It also aids in monitoring and evaluation of progress towards achieving the goal. The TOC arising from this study has the *long-term goal* of improving the transition of young people through school into work in South Africa. Work is broadly defined as informal, formal, entrepreneurship⁹, livelihood activities, public employment schemes, youth service and volunteering, among others. These work opportunities may be of different duration and may be performed in different employment settings. It is assumed that all work opportunities performed, and the formal and informal learning attached to these, provide cumulative work experience that connect youth to the labour market and that improve their employability. However, work opportunities should lead to progression in employment outcomes.

The pre-conditions for reaching this goal are:

- High-level political commitment to addressing the youth unemployment challenge;
- An integrated education and skills policy environment that is effectively implemented;

- A commitment from the private and public sectors to support youth and to collaborate with government in finding solutions to the challenge; and
- Inclusive economic growth that provides jobs in a diverse set of sectors for a diverse set of skills.

The absence of one or more of these presents a risk to a successful outcome. While we have seen significant investments in addressing youth unemployment across all sectors, these have not been integrated or well implemented. A commitment to working together in an integrated fashion is therefore critical to the successful outcome of this theory of change.

Theory of change problem statement

There are high numbers of young people who are locked out of the labour market due to low skills levels, a range of individual and household level barriers, a perceived risk on the part of employers in hiring youth, and insufficient jobs for the levels of skills available. These inter-related challenges are exacerbated by inadequate cross-sectoral policy implementation processes and systems to support young people through education and training and into the labour market.

⁹ Although we include entrepreneurship as an employment pathway, we did not specifically review evidence on entrepreneurship.

Theory of change objectives

1. Young people¹⁰ are adequately prepared and equipped with the necessary skills¹¹ for the labour market and the changing world of work.
2. Employers are willing and equipped to provide work experience opportunities to youth and support them to develop in their careers. This will include ensuring that employment opportunities in the public and private sectors exist for youth in short-term and longer-term jobs.
3. Young people are effectively supported with appropriate interventions to transition through the education and training system and into the labour market.
4. Effective and appropriate cross-sectoral processes of policy implementation to support youth in this transition are in place.

We propose the following mechanisms that will lead to the desired outcomes to reach these goals. These mechanisms speak to each of the objectives outlined above.

Outcomes and actions for each objective

Objective 1: Youth are equipped with the necessary skills

Outcome: More young people complete matric or an equivalent level and transition smoothly to training options that will equip them for the demands of the labour market and prepare them for the careers of their choice. The mechanism to achieve this outcome requires empowering young people through supportive interventions that will enable them to stay in school or access alternative school completion options, and by ensuring that they have access to and are guided through a range of further education and training options including work-integrated learning.

Actions required to achieve outcome 1:

- a) Scale up existing work-integrated learning opportunities while attending to quality concerns; and develop new learnerships and apprenticeships in identified areas of economic growth.
- b) Identify good practice programmes that support young people to stay in school and scale them up.
- c) Provide easily accessible programmes that can 'bridge' gaps in young people's numeracy and literacy levels.
- d) Develop communication campaigns that provide accurate information to young people, their parents and caregivers, and teachers about training options and pathways, including alternative options for completing school.

Objective 2: Employer willingness and commitment to employing youth in decent working conditions

Outcome: More employers have a commitment to youth employment that is evidenced in their having youth employment plans that are integral to human resources strategy. The mechanism to achieve this outcome requires that employers are empowered to employ and support the career growth of young people and have the requisite awareness of the significant employment and social challenges that young people face, but are also aware of the agency of young people and the need to support youth as partners in meeting the challenge.

Actions required to achieve outcome 2:

- a) Continuing to explore both private and public measures that encourage employers to give young first-time work seekers a foot on the employment ladder. A particular focus needs to be on small businesses, which currently employ two thirds of employed

¹⁰ Young people in this context refers to a range of different youth, including early school-leavers, those who complete matric with or without a bachelor's pass, and those who have been out of the schooling system for some time. We include males and females, urban and rural youth of all races, although we are aware that youth from poor socio-economic backgrounds require more support given the deficits of basic education and other barriers they face.

¹¹ By necessary skills we mean basic numeracy and literacy skills that can prepare young people to compete for entry-level jobs and navigate pathways to post-secondary education and training; as well as workplace relevant soft skills and technical skills that will enable them to compete for mid- to higher-level skills jobs.



youth. If the ETI is to be continued, it needs to involve a clear research agenda that continues to track its impact on creating jobs for youth. An important value of the ETI is that it is one intervention that connects the state, employers, and youth to some extent. It could therefore be leveraged to provide better information to these stakeholders as described in objective 3 below.

- b) Developing and rolling out an information campaign, targeted to employers, on the value of working with young people and on special considerations to take into account when employing youth; as well as how to support youth as they exit jobs.
- c) Paying particular attention to small businesses, which currently employ two thirds of employed youth, and ensuring they are supported to keep doing so.

Objective 3: Youth are effectively supported with appropriate interventions to transition through the education and training system and into the labour market

Outcome: Barriers to the labour market such as low social capital, high costs of work seeking, and lack of information are overcome through

better employment support, which will also promote a more efficient matching process. The mechanism to achieve this outcome is ensuring that accessible and effective employment support is scaled up to promote more efficient job search strategies.

Actions required to achieve outcome 3:

- a) Developing an information system that provides young people with the necessary training and employment support needed at a particular point in time in their education or labour market trajectory. Ideally, this system would be designed in such a way that it can reach out to young people pro-actively, to avoid more youth 'falling through the cracks' for extended periods.
- b) Introducing interventions that promote more efficient work search strategies, support young people to engage with the information system, and to develop and update their CVs and work search skills are made more accessible at labour centres, schools, libraries, NGOs, faith-based organisations and online. Such interventions should be accessible as young work seekers begin their engagement with the labour market but should also be available to young people exiting jobs and

seeking new employment opportunities.

- c) Training a cohort of youth workers to guide young people in their use of the information system and provide employment support. This could include young workers on the EPWP and CWP programmes, child and youth care workers, teachers, social workers, auxiliary social workers and librarians.

Objective 4: Effective cross-sectoral policy design and implementation

Outcome: An effective system of policy design and implementation that avoids fragmentation and in which those departments responsible are held accountable for implementation. The mechanism to achieve this outcome is to ensure that government departments and officials responsible for skills training and support for youth employment are identified and incentivised to ensure the *effective* implementation of existing policies and the coherence of existing and new policies. These include education policies, training and skills policies, and the youth policy among others and refers to all levels of governance.

Actions required to achieve outcome 4:

- a) Ensuring that surplus and duplicate youth desks are reviewed with careful consideration being given to clarifying mandates and identifying lines of accountability for the effective implementation of policy imperatives.
- b) Developing of a strong mechanism to coordinate and hold accountable the different departments responsible for youth training and employment.
- c) Providing the necessary resources to departments and officials that are responsible for implementation.
- d) Providing high-level political leadership for the implementation and monitoring of all youth employment policy priorities.
- e)

- f) Ensuring that civil society, and in particular youth organisations, hold departments and officials to account for the effective implementation of youth employment policy priorities.

The TOC is not prescriptive about the actual intervention programmes to implement the objectives and achieve the envisaged outcomes and goals. If accepted, these actions will need to be developed in consultation with the strategic partners for each of the above mechanisms.

Conclusion

While the challenge of youth unemployment in South Africa may seem overwhelming to address, this systematic overview has identified a strong body of evidence about what contributes to the challenge; an expansive set of policies that can underpin current and future efforts; significant prior investments in interventions on which to build; and knowledge gaps to address.

Five key contributing factors to the youth unemployment challenge emerged from this expansive synthesis of available evidence, which in turn informed the development of the theory of change to guide future interventions and public action. The proposed interventions are targeted to different groups.

The first groups consists of policy-makers and implementers to improve policy coordination and implementation across sectors. This has proved to be more complex than expected. The second focus of intervention is on employers who may be more risk-averse in hiring young first-time work seekers. A third target group comprises of educators, trainers, professionals and paraprofessionals to improve skills to make young people more employable.

Finally, a set of interventions are identified that target youth themselves to improve their job search capability through the provision of support. We argue in the TOC that these four sets of interventions are important building blocks in enhancing the transition of young people from school into the labour market and should lead to improvements in youth employment outcomes.

While the tasks outlined above may seem daunting, much of the groundwork has already been laid in terms of policies and programmes. What remains is to engender support for a social compact of political, employer, trade union, educator, trainer, parent and youth, to take the necessary further steps to chart a different path for young people in South Africa. Holding one another accountable to

safeguard the future of young people should be the focal point for future action.

For more details, see the full report on this review:

De Lannoy, A., Graham, L., Patel, L., & Leibbrandt, M. (2018). *What Drives Youth Unemployment and What Interventions Help: A Systematic Overview of the Evidence. High-level Overview Report. REDI 3X3:* <http://www.redi3x3.org/>

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- Makgetla, I., & De Lannoy, A. (forthcoming). A Review of Policies regarding Youth (Un)employment 1990–2016. REDI 3X3: <http://www.redi3x3.org/>
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