

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NAMIBIA

**A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
MASTERS DEGREE IN PUBLIC POLICY AND
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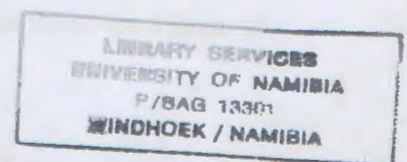
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ABSTRACT

The labour market in Namibia is characterized by a number of serious imbalances, notably between aggregate demand for and supply of labour, and between the skills required and those on offer. Unemployment is therefore one of the most serious problems in Namibia especially among youth.

This study set out to identify and analyse the factors that have been responsible for high unemployment among youth and the influence of the labour market policies in Namibia. The current high unemployment rate is mostly attributed to the low education levels among the economically active population and economic structure (exports of unprocessed primary products). In Namibia, 15% of the population have no formal education at all and more than half of the population (54%) have only completed or attained some level of primary education.

Only 2% have reached higher education. Youth unemployment is also exacerbated by the re-admission and age limits policy imposed for junior secondary education in Namibia. Students over the age of 17 who fail grade 10 are not allowed to repeat this level in the formal educational system, but should look for alternative educational institutions, which are often too expensive for their parents to afford. Thus, many youths tend to drop out of school at this level and join the ranks of the unemployed.

Another reason is that the acquisition of skills and experience of the present generation of youth is an important factor in explaining future social and economic development. Youth unemployment, especially if it is persistent, excludes an important part of the labour force from participation in the economy and thus limits the capacity for growth.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, my husband Reinhold, and my three children, Linekela, Selma and Petrus for their support, patience and understanding when I was undertaking the study and sometimes not being readily available for them.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the content of the work presented in the research paper is my own, and where I have used other people's work or ideas, I have referred to them as such.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EPZ	-	Export Processing Zones
ILO	-	International Labour Organisation
LaRRI	-	Labour Resource and Research Institute
LFS	-	Labour Force Survey
LM	-	Labour Market
LMP	-	Labour Market Policies
MHEVEC	-	Ministry of Higher Education Vocational Training and Employment Creation
MLHRD	-	Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development
MoL	-	Ministry of Labour
NAMCOL	-	Namibia College of Open Learning
NEPRU	-	Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit
NDP1	-	National Development Plan 1
NDP2	-	National Development Plan 2
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organizations
NLFS	-	National Labour Force Survey
NPC	-	National Planning Commission
NYEFU	-	Namibia Youth Enterprises for Fighting Unemployment
OECD	-	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SAMAT	-	Southern Africa Multi-disciplinary Advisory Team
SWANU	-	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	-	South West Africa People's Organization
SMEs	-	Small and Medium Enterprises
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programmes

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

At independence in 1990, Namibia inherited a highly segmented population, in which every defined 'ethnic group' had highly different access to employment opportunities and wages. Conditions of employment were discriminatory and unfair. These shortcomings included systematic discriminatory policies on wages and labour conditions based on race, gender, ethnicity and political affiliation.

This situation constantly provoked occurrences of industrial unrest and disharmony between employers, employees and trade unions. Continued unfair conditions of employment, inadequate occupational health and safety standards, lack of freedom of association and suppression of trade unions further aggravated the unstable labour relations. The unemployment rate was predominantly higher among the blacks than among the whites and unequal employment services were rendered according to ethnic groups.

Namibia's population is relatively young with 69% of the population being less than 30 years old (see Table 1). This causes a large number of school leavers entering the labour market each year. Like in any country in the world, unemployment in Namibia affects the youth: 67% of those between the ages 15 - 19 years and 59% of those between 20 - 24 years were unemployed in 2000. On the other hand, the unemployment rate stood at only 17% for those between 45 and 49 years (*NLFS 2002*).

The legacy of past inequalities is pervasive and frustrates efficient functioning of the labour market. This is compounded by rigidities in the labour market, which hinder job creation in the formal sector and

contribute to income disparities. Furthermore, Namibia's labour market is characterised by:

- low labour market security, with high unemployment and underemployment;
- low employment security (given that notice periods are typically short by international standards, there is much casual labour, and labour broking, and use of contract labour);
- low job security in that the job grading systems built up in the apartheid era took 'taylorism' to extreme proportions and gave workers little control over the development and retention of their competencies;
- unequal income security and, for most labour force participants, inadequate in part because of low wages, and inadequate occupational welfare;
- low skill reproduction security for most people, compromised by inadequate quantity and variety of vocational training opportunities and the virtual demise of apprenticeships. This is a very critical area in our situation as improvements in all other forms of security depend on this (NEPRU 2001).

The labour force's unemployment definition is based on three criteria, namely:

- (i) being without work,
- (ii) being available for work, and
- (iii) seeking work.

The 'strict' definition of unemployment excludes from the ranks of the unemployed those individuals (15-65 years old) who are without jobs and available for work, but who are not actively seeking work (MOL 2002 22). The 'broad definition' of unemployment on the other hand regards every person who is 15 - 65 years of age and without work but available for work as being unemployed - whether he/she is looking for work or not. The Labour Force Survey presents unemployment figures for both definitions as follows:

Unemployment in Namibia according to the broad definition stands at 34% whilst this figure is reduced to 20% when the strict definition is applied. The Survey suggests a slight decline in unemployment as unemployment was recorded at 35% in 1997.

Using the 'strict' definition of unemployment in the context of the Namibian labour market is problematic. The criterion 'actively seeking for work' classifying the unemployed may not be accurate as many unemployed people may have stopped looking for work not because they do not want to work, but simply because they might have given up hope of finding a job. Others may not bother to seek for work as they witness the fruitless efforts of their friends and relatives. Thus, the criterion of 'not seeking work' tells us very little and may not be a relevant criterion in labour markets that are characterised by mass unemployment.

Using the strict definition of unemployment the urban unemployment rate (24%) is higher than the rural unemployment rate (17%). However, the situation becomes quite different when the broad measure is applied. The rural unemployment rate then stands at 36% compared to 31% in urban areas. This is an indication that many unemployed in rural areas are no longer 'actively seeking' employment but are unemployed nonetheless.

Unemployment has a gender dimension, as the rate is significantly higher among women (39%) than among men (28%). Female unemployment remains higher than male irrespective of the definition of unemployment used. Using the broad definition of unemployment, the Kavango region had the lowest rate of unemployment (23%), followed by Caprivi with 24% while Ohangwena recorded the highest unemployment rate (58%) (NLFS 2002).

Table 1.1: Unemployment - broad definition (2002)

Area	Namibia	Female	Male
Nationally	33.8	39.0	28.3
Urban Areas	31.3	37.2	25.4
Rural Areas	35.9	40.4	30.8

Source: NLFS, 2002.

Unemployment in Namibia is of a long-term nature as 32% of the unemployed have been jobless for two years or more. Another 13% have been unemployed for one to three years while only five per cent of the unemployed population has been without a job for less than three months. There is no significant difference between men and women regarding the duration of unemployment. However, there is a marked difference between urban and rural areas as the unemployed in the rural areas have been out of jobs for much longer compared to those in the urban areas. Long-term unemployment (two years or more) in rural areas affected 38% of the unemployed compared to 28% in urban areas.

Table 1.2: Youth Unemployment Rate by Age and Sex

Age	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
15	92.5	35.8	56.1
16	61.0	59.1	60.0
17	70.4	65.0	67.7
18	76.5	60.6	68.7
19	74.7	63.4	69.6
20	66.4	60.7	63.9
21	69.7	65.6	68.0
22	65.9	52.2	60.4
23	54.0	57.2	55.5
24	56.3	41.1	48.5
Total	65.2	56.4	61.2

Source: NLFS, 2002.

Table 1.2 clearly indicates that unemployment does not affect all age groups equally. It stands exceedingly high at 68% for the youngest age group of 17 years, going up as high as 70% for those 19 years before it goes down to 64% for those youngsters of 20 years. Furthermore, the labour market tends to employ those with some sort of post schooling qualifications and perhaps mature, therefore unemployment cannot be expected to be high within the age group of 45- 49. Females make up the bulk of the unemployed youth (ages 15-25), but their chances of finding work improves with age to the extent that the incidence of unemployment among women is lower than that of men in the higher age groups. Thus the more one gets older the more one has a good chance of employment, probably due to maturity and distance learning among mature people.

An assessment of the labour market in Namibia reports a mixed record. The degree of poverty and economic inequality remain unacceptable, while unemployment, productivity and labour costs are all worrying, and the state of industrial relation is fragile. It also reported a low level of labour security in labour market institutions (*Nepu 2001*).

Unemployment is amongst Namibia's priority socio-economic problems that the government has been trying to address since independence. Although government has to play a central role in employment creation, other stakeholders in the development process also need to make a contribution. The private sector, trade unions and development NGOs can make a significant contribution to ensure that the unemployment problem is addressed strategically and correctly.

The current high unemployment rate is mostly attributed to the colonial economic structure (exports of unprocessed primary products) and the low education levels among the economically active population. In Namibia, 15% of the population have no formal

education at all and more than half of the population (54%) have only completed or attained some level of primary education. Only one per cent has reached higher education. This is an after-effect of the colonial regime, which deliberately withheld proper education from the majority to allow only a handful of learners to obtain a school-leaving certificate. Out of a small number of school leavers, only a fraction managed to go to tertiary institutions, usually through churches and sympathetic organisations that provided scholarships.

Over 80% of the unemployed population are 24-34 years old. They were of school-going age during the 1970s and 1980s at the peak of colonialism. Most are school dropouts, due to the very poor socio-economic conditions coupled with political-military insecurity especially in the former Ovamboland and Kavangoland where about 60% of the country's population is concentrated. These statistics are a reflection of the fact that efforts to redress education deprivation are recent, having started only after the country attained independence (*LaRRI 2000*).

Most developing markets rely more on the exportation of commodity goods and Namibia is not an exception. The international prices of these goods are very much fluctuating, and the fluctuation is not in favour of these developing markets. Namibia is not an exception because 90% of its exports consists of these commodity goods. The mining industry has retrenched a number of workers due to the bleak picture of the uranium and diamond prices in the international market. Labour force statistics on employment by sector show that the employment figures in the primary sector have been declining.

Unemployment is not only an economic problem but also a political problem. If unemployment in Namibia continues to grow like this for the next five to 10 years, it is more likely to threaten the democratic order that many Namibians fought hard for.

Many political parties including the ruling party South West Africa Peoples' Organisation (SWAPO) promised jobs to the voters. One of the prominent slogans during the election campaign of 1994 and 1999 was – jobs for all. It has to be stated here that it is not that the SWAPO government has turned a blind eye towards its voters.

The fact of the matter is that it has to face the reality of restructuring a struggling economy. That restructuring process is a painful process that might not only threaten the SWAPO's political ambitions, but also the democratic foundations of the present government. The SWAPO government seems to acknowledge this. "No political democracy can survive and flourish if the masses of our people are unemployed, remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for better life" (*SWAPO Manifesto 1999*).

Unemployment is also a social problem as it leads to social exclusion, poverty and other social commotion. The high unemployment rate in Namibia has created a fertile ground for crime now engulfing Namibia. While the state and capital have ambiguous relationship to unemployment, the wastage of resources and the potential for social turmoil implicit in the current levels of joblessness counterbalance the more pleasing feature. Namibia, like many other developing countries has a population tree that is very big at the bottom and narrows at the top. This means the majority of people in Namibia are young.

The majority of this young population is black. This high rate of youth unemployment contributes to a sense of despair amongst the nation's young people and may well encourage some to become involved in criminal and gang activities. It must be borne in mind that it is this young black population that was in constant battles with the then forces of the South African apartheid government. Some of them will struggle to get jobs because they do not have skills. It is this group,

which has been labelled by other sectors of the media as the "lost generation, marginalized youth" (*LaRRI 2000*).

Although it is undeniable that some of the youth are marginalized, it is labels or stigmas like lost generation that will push them to find a way at all costs. In most of the big townships, crime has become a way of life among this section of the population. It is perceived by those who have no prospects of getting jobs as a quick rich project. This increasing crime rate is a threat to the Namibian young democracy.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Youth Unemployment is very high in Namibia. The worrying factor is that unemployment is very high at the tender age, the age group of 15-24, where about 70% are unemployed. There is a growing consensus among scholars and academics in the field economic development in Namibia that high unemployment in Namibia indicates the low base of the economy. Many scholars believe that unemployment is even higher than the official figures of 20% 'strict' definition (*NLFS 2002*). A survey by the Labour Resource and Research Institute (*LaRRI*) in June 2004 revealed an estimated overall jobless rate in the country of 34%, with the majority of these, 67%, being young people under the age of 25 (*LaRRI 2004*).

LaRRI concluded that unemployment rate was up by eight per cent since the last Labour Force Survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour in 1997. The Namibian labour market is characterised by a young age structure, as over half the population is younger than 25 years of age.

The overall high levels of unemployment, with a national average of 34 per cent, are especially felt among women (40 per cent) and the youth (over 60%). Spiralling unemployment, particularly in a country like

Namibia, which provides no financial cushion for those who are jobless, is undoubtedly one of the greatest concerns of policy makers and economic planners (LaRRI 2004). However, significant progress has been made when one compares the present to the inequitable situation of the past.

Namibia's recent history of colonisation and the legacy of apartheid mean that most job seekers are from previously disadvantaged background. They are, therefore, less educated and do not have sufficient qualifications. Although employment agencies are available in the country, they do not cater for unskilled or unqualified people. In addition, job advertisements in print and other media are rare for people without skills or qualifications.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- (a) assess the nature and causes of youth unemployment in Namibia;
- (b) analyse the influence of labour market policies on youth unemployment in Namibia.

1.4 Research Questions

The study tries to address the following research questions, which relate to the above objectives:

- What are the root causes of the youth unemployment problem in Namibia?
- Have the labour market policies in Namibia addressed the question of youth unemployment?

- Why has the Namibian economy been unable to create enough jobs?

1.5 Significance of the Study

High unemployment and visible underemployment (60%) are one of the major development challenges facing policy makers and economic planners. Namibia's Human Resource Plan reveals severe deficits of higher and middle-level professionals and technically skilled personnel. More than 60% of the employed labour force has only a primary education or no schooling at all; fewer than 6% have completed some tertiary education.

The Namibian population is relatively young and therefore, unemployment among the country's youth must be understood in the context of the overall young age structure of the population, because half of the population are younger than 25 years of age. Young people accounted for over 60% of the unemployed (*LaRRI 2004*).

Many researchers and planners have conducted researches and surveys on unemployment in the country recently, but not on youth unemployment. The importance of this study is that it reviews the factors that have been responsible for the increasing youth unemployment in Namibia, and why the plight of youth unemployment is sky rocketing. The study provides information, which could guide policy makers in policy formulation as well as in the implementation of development strategies.

1.6 Research Methodology

The study is exploratory in nature, due to the fact that there are gaps in the Namibian labour market information. An analysis is done of the available information about youth unemployment and the influence of the labour market policies in Namibia. The study reviews the labour

market policies from 1990 – 2004, which were put in place to combat inequalities in the labour market, especially among the youth.

Factors that have been responsible for high youth unemployment are identified. Qualitative methods are employed in interpreting data collected from secondary sources consisting of published books, legal documents (Acts), published and unpublished materials, reports, journals, newspapers and magazines from libraries as well as internet. Primary data obtained through interviews are used to assess people's perceptions of the effectiveness of labour market policies in combating youth unemployment.

Additional secondary data collected from Ministry of Higher Education is used to analyse the reasons for school dropouts countrywide. Dropping out of school prematurely before acquiring sufficient knowledge and skills to make one competitive in the labour market is a possible cause of youth unemployment in Namibia.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical/conceptual framework and empirical literature review. Concepts such as unemployment, youth unemployment and labour market policies both in general and among African countries of the sub-Saharan Africa are defined.

2.2 The Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment has received a lot of theoretical input from academics in the field of development and economics in general. There are various categories of unemployment. Unemployment is considered to be *voluntary* or *involuntary*. *Voluntary* unemployment refers to those who exclude from consideration some jobs for which they could qualify, implying that they have some means of support other than employment. *Involuntary* unemployment refers to those who are sincerely seeking any kind of job in the job market. (Meier 1989).

The ILO definition of unemployment covers people who are: out of work, want a job, have actively sought work in the previous four weeks and are available to start work within the next fortnight; or out of work and have accepted a job that they are waiting to start in the next fortnight. Unemployment is a count of jobless people who want to work, are available to work, and are actively seeking employment.

The ILO definition is used internationally, so comparisons between countries can be made, and it allows for consistent comparisons over time. Unemployment is calculated using data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), so it is subject to sampling differences (ILO 1982).

Labour market (LM) is defined as virtual space where in a more or less organised manner, the demand for and supply of all sorts of labour will meet, and where wages are determined. In a free market, demand and supply (the market forces) determine together the price of labour and, hence, how much of it will be employed. (ILO 2002). *Labour market policies (LMP)* are measures meant to address failure in labour markets. In particular, measures that reduce unwanted distortions in the process of supply and demand. The aim of these policies is to relieve tensions in the labour market and alleviate poverty associated with unemployment (ILO 1999).

The Namibian labour market employs two definitions of unemployment. The first definition is 'strict' definition, which includes only those who are available, actively looking for a job and ready to work within the next fortnight. The second one is the 'broad' definition of unemployment, which includes those who are discouraged to look for work because they have been out of work for more than six to eight years. In Namibia, we have many people, especially youth, who have stopped to look for work.

The unemployed population consists of all persons 15 years and above who are either actively seeking work or are available for work during the reference period. The existence of unemployment implies that the supply of labour is greater than its demand. A high unemployment rate means that many people are without jobs because of a shortfall in employment opportunities.

The NLFS 2002 indicates that the Unemployment rate in Namibia (broad definition) is 34% compared to 35% estimated in the NLFS 1997. When we adopt the strict definition, unemployment rate in 2002 drops to 20 %, which is higher than the 19% estimated in the NLFS 1997.

The rate of unemployment is higher among females (39 per cent) than among males (28%). The unemployment rate is higher in rural areas (36 %) than in urban areas (31%).

2.3 Educational Profile of the Unemployed

The unemployed population in Namibia is characterized by:

- (a) a relatively low proportion (8 per cent) of those with no formal education (see Table 2);
- (b) a large proportion (38 per cent) with primary education; and
- (c) a relatively large proportion of those who have attained secondary education (36 per cent junior secondary and 17 per cent senior secondary), a small proportion (less than one per cent) with post secondary education (after Std 10, University or Post-Graduate).

The urban unemployed have better levels of educational attainment than their rural counterparts do.

Table 2. Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, Area and Sex

Educational attainment	Urban			Rural			Namibia		
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
	<i>Broad measure of unemployment</i>								
No education	35.9	18.0	23.8	30.0	16.6	22.9	30.7	16.9	23.1
Primary education	45.3	27.1	35.3	39.0	33.0	36.1	40.9	30.9	35.8
Junior Secondary	43.7	30.3	37.6	49.7	41.3	46.4	46.7	35.1	41.8
Senior Secondary	32.7	26.5	29.7	49.3	35.4	43.2	38.3	29.2	34.0
After Std.10Certificate	7.5	7.0	7.2	5.2	13.1	9.1	6.6	8.9	7.9
University	2.0	1.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.9	1.3
Post Graduate degree	3.2	3.9	3.5	23.0	0.0	12.1	5.4	3.5	4.5
Teacher Training	0.9	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.3
Not reported	39.0	31.7	34.4	14.3	19.3	17.5	31.5	27.8	29.2
Total	37.2	25.4	31.3	40.4	30.8	35.9	39.0	28.3	33.8
	<i>Strict measure of unemployment</i>								
No education	23.8	14.5	17.2	4.3	6.5	5.6	7.1	8.3	7.8
Primary education	79.2	47.3	57.0	18.2	25.2	21.9	37.1	35.6	36.2
Junior Secondary	33.2	25.4	29.5	25.6	27.2	26.3	29.8	26.1	28.1
Senior Secondary	24.0	21.2	22.6	33.6	27.0	30.5	27.0	22.9	25.0
After Std.10Certificate	3.2	6.2	5.0	1.3	5.6	3.3	2.4	6.0	4.4
University	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.9	0.7
Post Graduate degree	1.4	3.9	2.6	23.0	0.0	12.1	3.8	3.5	3.7
Teacher Training	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not reported	30.3	29.0	29.4	0.0	6.7	4.3	21.2	22.5	22.0
Total	27.2	21.2	24.0	16.3	16.9	16.6	21.5	19.0	20.2

Source NLFS, 2002

Do higher levels of educational attainment provide a shield against unemployment? Table 2 provides the answer by showing the rates of unemployment at different levels of educational attainment. A remarkable difference in unemployment rates exists between those with and without higher education. The unemployment rate for those

with qualifications beyond secondary education is lower, four per cent than for those with no formal education (23%). The unemployment rate for people with university qualifications is one per cent at the national level, two per cent in urban areas and 0.0 per cent in rural areas.

The unemployment rate for persons without any formal education is lower in rural areas (23%) than in urban areas (24%). The reason could be that people without any formal education in rural areas are more willing to accept elementary jobs than those with primary or secondary education.

Another reason could be attributed to the fact that jobs requiring no particular education or skill are more plentiful in rural areas than in urban areas where the demand for skilled labour is higher than for unskilled labour. Furthermore, the table shows that the unemployment rate for females is higher (39%) than for males (28 %). According to the broad definition of unemployment, this is true at virtually all levels of education with the exception of the unemployment rate for females with after Std 10 certificate which is lower (seven per cent) than that of their male counterparts (nine per cent).

2.4 Youth Unemployment

According to the United Nations, the youth are the group of people between 15 and 24 years of age. Those in the 15-19 age groups are the younger segment, and those in the age group of 20-24 are the older segment. In practice, the operational definition of youth varies widely from country to country depending on cultural, institutional and political factors. In industrialised countries, the lower age limit usually corresponds to the statutory minimum school-leaving age.

Whilst the upper limit tends to vary more widely. In Britain, for example, "Youth Employment Policy" generally refers to policies targeted at the 16-18 year old age group whilst in Italy the term is used to describe policies for people aged between 14-29 in Northern Italy and 14-32 in Southern Italy (*ILO 1997*).

It is clear that the definition of who is a youth very much depends on which dimension of "youth" takes precedence: demographic (e.g. age); cultural (notions of adulthood); biological (attainment of puberty); social (attainment of maturity or marriage-ability); or economic (e.g. ability to sustain oneself). The spectrum of youth has been variously defined to range from the ages of 10 or 11 years (as in some cultural traditions), to as high as 34 years (as in South Africa for instance) (*ILO 2001*).

More generally, the age range between 12 and 25 years is presupposed, which may even be narrowed to 15-24 years. The age ranges in most cases do not necessarily reflect any official definition of who constitute the youth. In the case of Uganda, the National Youth Council Statute 1993 defines the youth to be those persons of either sex between the ages of 18-30. In other cases, the specified ranges merely reflect the age dis-aggregation available in the sources of data. Whether these ranges reflect any specific national definition of "youth" is not known.

In Namibia, the National Youth Council defines youth as "those young men and women in the ages ranging from 16 – 30 years". For practical reasons, youth activities will often need to embrace those children below 15 years. (*Ministry of Higher Education 1993*).

In 2000, the global youth population was estimated at 1.066 billion, which was 17.5% of the total world population: approximately 80% of the world youth live in less developed countries, where their number

is expected to increase in the current century, while its percentage has decreased in the developed countries. The most obvious general labour market characteristic of youth unemployment is that its rate is higher than that for adults. The observation is true in a wide range of countries of the world.

con } The un- and under-employment of youth is considered a serious problem in most African countries mainly, because there are relatively speaking, more youth and fewer jobs on offer than in the rest of the world. As young people represent a clear majority of new labour force entrants, they are bound to discover in large numbers how difficult it is to find any sort of work, regardless of their level of schooling. Although statistics are, again, often unavailable or incomparable, unemployment in the 15-24 age groups is generally believed, by far, to exceed the rate for the sub-Saharan labour force as a whole. And, indeed, for various reasons, many governments appear more worried about unemployed school leavers, than about a high incidence of child labour or about abject poverty among those in their thirties or forties (ILO 2001).

The 1999 Ethiopia labour force survey reported an unemployment rate for the national labour force as a whole of eight per cent. The rate of unemployment for young people, particularly in urban areas, tends to be a multiple of national average. The 1997 Namibia labour force survey, also illustrates well what is generally believed to be the case for many other sub-Saharan African countries, namely that unemployment is serious, but more so for the young than for the not so young, more so for women than men and more so in urban than in rural areas.

Among the unemployed in Namibia, those between the age group 15 – 24 are the most affected, their unemployment rate exceeds any other age group. This group is often referred to as the *unemployed youth*. The youth experience high unemployment in part because many of them tend to drop out of school or leave school too soon, especially in rural areas. Most of them do so with the hope to find work.

However, in most cases this hope is in vain because they lack skills and experience required in the job market. The difference in unemployment rates between rural and urban youth may be attributed to the fact that it is much easier for youth in rural areas to be employed unlike in urban areas. The high unemployment of younger groups in the labour market is a cause for concern from the standpoint of their relatively low educational qualifications and lack of job experience.

Human labour becomes more and more productive due to new technologies and the globalisation of markets. The world has produced a generation of more literate, multilingual and ambitious young women and men approaching adulthood. Nevertheless, there are still about 70 million young people without paid work. Many more youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are underemployed. Around 500 million new jobs will be necessary by 2010. Statistics also claim that 1 % increase in adult unemployment rate is accompanied by a two per cent increase in youth unemployment rate (*UNDP 2001*).

In many countries of the world, the situation with youth unemployment is certainly very serious. Problems arise when young people first come to the labour market looking for work. In the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, for example, in 1998 the unemployment rate of 15-24 age groups was 13%, more than double the figure for adults, which stood

at six per cent. Statistics say that in these countries the number of unemployed young people is around 10 million.

In developing countries, the problem of integrating young people into the labour market is even more serious, where the gap between youth and adult unemployment rates is much wider than in industrialized countries. For example, Zimbabwe teenagers (15-19 years) in 1997 faced an unemployment rate of 18%; young adults (20-24 years) faced slightly better at 16%, while the adult rate was at five per cent (*Central Statistical Office 1998*). In the same year in Brazil, the youth unemployment rate was 17%, compared with six per cent for adults. The situation in transitional economies is just as bad as in developing countries. In Hungary, for example, in 1997 the youth unemployment rate was 16%, compared to an adult rate of 8% (*ILO 1999*).

The problem of youth unemployment and underemployment in Africa poses complex economic, social and moral policy issues. It is also well known that this problem is part of the overall problem of unemployment and underemployment that afflicts almost all African countries and Namibia is not an exception. In its generality, the problem affects the majority of adults in both rural and urban areas, even if its incidence may be higher among the youth, women and rural folk. In attempting to devise policies to alleviate the plight of the youth in this regard, it is important that the foregoing aspects of the problem (its multifaceted nature and its being part of a larger problem) are explicitly recognized and taken into account.

The active population in Africa comprises up to half of the total population. A large part of it, including the youth, is employed in agriculture and the informal sector, both of which are characterized by the prevalence of underemployment. Although hard data on time-related and other forms of underemployment are generally lacking in Africa, the seasonal character of agriculture, the low incomes in the

informal sector, and various structural factors all point to the inadequate utilization of labour in most countries.

Another part of the active population in Africa is openly unemployed. In southern Africa, unemployment rates exceeding 20 per cent are not uncommon. In much of the rest of Africa, too, unemployment rates are relatively high, though perhaps not as high as in some southern African countries where the formal sector tends to be large. Youth unemployment rates, where the youth are defined as those 15-24 years of age, are even higher (*O'Higgins 1997 and UNDP 1998*).

The youth unemployment problem is also exacerbated by the demographic structure of the population. The combination of high population growth and low life expectancies implies that the populations in Africa are comparatively youthful, with the age dependency ratio (ratio of dependants to the working population) close to one, as compared to a ratio of less than one for many countries elsewhere in the world. Population dynamics and labour market conditions in sub-Saharan Africa are such that, more often than not, the youth comprise more than half of the total number of the unemployed, although their share in the labour force is typically of the order of 20% to 40%. The youth thus bear the brunt of the unemployment problem in many African countries.

Labour force participation in Africa has historically been in favour of men, with women representing less than 40% of the labour force. It is also estimated that children between the ages of 10 and 14 may constitute as much as 30% of the labour force in the continent. Thus, not only is female labour under-utilised, but also many children and youth are in general mis-utilised in a manner that undermines their development as human beings and human capital.

The increasing labour force participation of youth, especially of those (children) below the age of 15 years, poses both moral and social questions that are not easily resolved by simply providing adequate employment opportunities for the youth. First, youth are compelled by circumstances to engage in job search, survival activities or work when they are at their most vulnerable ages physically, morally and socially. Second, they are forced to participate in the labour force when they should be undergoing socialization to make better citizens in their communities. On both these accounts the problem of youth unemployment and underemployment poses moral and social questions for which household and public resources are needed which are currently lacking or inadequate, but for which work may not necessarily be the solution.

To these must be added the economic consideration, which requires that youth be invested in as future human capital for which there are well-known long term private and social benefits. It is clear therefore that when youth as a resource are mis-utilised, the society compromises its moral, social and economic objectives, and this increasingly is the case in much of Africa.

How can high rates of unemployment among youth in sub-Saharan Africa be explained? One reason is clearly the high rate of population growth, which has resulted in a relatively young population and a large proportion of youth in the population of working age. However, demographic factors can only explain part of the youth unemployment problem. An ILO contribution to a Workshop on the Formulation of the National Programme of Action for Youth in *Zambia* highlights three issues in this context that are relevant in many other African countries as well (*Ministry of Sport Youth and Child Development - MSYCD - 1996*):

- The slow growth, or lately decline, in formal sector employment. These points to slow economic growth – or worse, stagnation or even economic contraction – in the recent past, which has depressed overall demand for labour. *There are no new jobs coming up.* This is by far the most important reason behind the unemployment crisis. Any strategy to combat youth unemployment *must* be based on boosting labour demand on a sustainable basis through economic policies that improve the conditions for enterprises to do business and hire people. Although employment growth in the formal sector can only be a partial answer to the problem, a general revival of the economy should, by establishing linkages to informal activities, also boost demand and economic activity in the informal sectors.

- As far as formal sector employment is concerned, the skills that job seekers possess do not match the need and demand of employers. The education system, with its liberal bias, does simply not produce the type of skills demanded in formal employment, with its strong dominance of mining and manufacturing. Nevertheless, there are also other reasons, [including] the underlying perception among policy makers – and also among the ultimate beneficiaries, the youth – that employment means a job with a wage or salary and working for somebody else. These perceptions have strongly influenced those institutions that provide skills training.

Training programmes and curricula are eminently biased towards preparing for formal sector wage jobs. Since these jobs simply do not exist, there is a serious mismatch

between expectations/skills of job seekers on the one hand and available job opportunities on the other.

- Finally, among policy makers there has been a strong assumption that the main cause of unemployment among the youth has been the absence of artisanal and vocational skills. This has led to the continuous expansion of training supply in such areas as carpentry, auto-mechanics, bricklaying, etc. This has been an eminently supply-driven response to training, ignoring the demand for these skills and the absorptive capacities of communities to effectively make use of them. Market saturation has been the result. Training in these skills now leads to unemployment. The fundamental lesson of these programmes is that any training intervention should be based on a careful assessment of available job opportunities and opportunities for production that would require skills and therefore create a demand for training (*ILO/SAMAT 2000*).

These two factors – the low growth rate of the economy and the limited relevance of the education and training system – have been identified in many African countries as key issues in the explanation of youth unemployment. Both issues are also subject to policies and programmes addressing youth unemployment.

2.5 Structural Causes of Unemployment

When referring to structural causes of unemployment one has in mind distinctive socio-economic attributes, which by their very nature tend to reinforce low employment levels. These attributes are relatively rigid societal characteristics of mainly historical, but also of geographic, demographic and cultural, origin, which can have an inhibiting effect on broad economic participation.

As such, unemployment resulting from structural variables has greater permanency, whilst unemployment related to cyclical economic causes tends to fluctuate. Some of the more significant structural causes of unemployment in Namibia, either directly or indirectly, include persisting educational deficiencies; shortage of skilled labour (both white and blue collar); incongruent work ethics; small domestic market; resource constraints (water, poor soils); high population growth; and the continuing effects of a segmented, skewed economy.

Whereas structural causes of unemployment are the most pervasive and ingrained in developing societies, supply and demand related unemployment, may play an even greater role on a global scale. Mention has already been made of cyclical variations. Being part of an ever more closely intertwined international community, Namibia is highly sensitive to fluctuations in world commodity prices, shifting trade patterns, and the vagaries of major stock markets, etc. Accelerating globalization coupled with amazing technological advances has also resulted in stiff international competition, market liberalization and a plethora of revolutionary, labour displacing high-tech innovations. All of these diminish the demand for labour: some temporarily, others probably more permanently so (*van Rooyen 2001*).

Yet another causal category potentially contributing to unemployment includes more diverse factors such as diminishing donor interest; perceived political instability or security risks; aspects of fiscal policy; over-regulation; labour market rigidities; and sporadic unstable industrial relations. Here the source of the problem is more externally located, or alternatively, mainly a question of policy and volition, rather than being symptomatic of societal characteristics or economic fluctuations.

To complete the spectrum of types of unemployment, one also has forms of frictional unemployment (the time spent between giving up one job and finding another) and seasonal unemployment (such as found in fishing, agriculture and tourism). Both are rather less severe to the individual because of their temporary nature. However, in macro terms the effect of excessive frictional and seasonal unemployment significantly adds to the total unemployment index at any given point in time.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXTENT OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NAMIBIA

3.1 Introduction

The labour market in Namibia is characterized by a number of serious imbalances, notably between aggregate demands for and supply of labour, and between the skills required and those on offer.

Unemployment is therefore one of the most serious problems in Namibia. More often than not, large majorities of those who join the labour force in developing countries like Namibia, and others who may have as a result of crisis and economic reforms lost their wage-jobs in the formal sector, end up being self-employed or as casual workers in micro-enterprises of the informal sector. Their job satisfaction tends to be low due to: low levels of productivity and income; environments that are dangerous or unhealthy beyond the scope of legal and social protection; and risk of exploitation and harassment.

The approach the government has adopted to address these problems appears not to be equipped to design and implement labour market policies that would help in promoting decent work and reducing poverty. At times, private sectors and other social partners do not comply with the government policies when it comes to hiring and firing of workers (*NEPRU 2001*).

The study reviewed the labour market policies from 1990 – 2004, which were put in place to combat inequalities in the labour market especially among youth unemployment. The root causes of the unemployment problem in the country are universally linked with the discriminatory policies of the colonial regime during the apartheid system, which crippled the labour market policies. During this time,

on-the-job training did not take place simply because workers were utilized on temporary basis and could be dropped anytime. At the same time, education was based on ethnic groups and blacks were given Bantu education, which was designed strategically to deprive indigenous Namibians access to their country's resources, which could uplift their standard of living. In the situation prevailing at the moment, Namibia has a large number of unskilled and unemployed people as a result of the previous discriminatory policies.

A major factor underlying this inequality is unequal access to education during colonial time. Learner-teacher ratio varied from 13.1 in 'white' schools to 37:1 for 'Ovambo' schools (*NPC1998*). This system created on the one hand, a large army of unskilled and unemployed persons, and on the other hand considerable skill shortage.

After independence, Namibia has consistently spent large amounts on education, which is important for redressing the inequalities in the labour market. However, some shortcomings reduce the benefits of this:

- inefficiencies, measured in low outputs such as high failure rate and high school drop outs;
- inappropriate priorities;
- an attempt to provide all kinds of training regardless of the scale of need, and the desired quality; and
- specifically a bias towards formal sector employment.

"So far, efforts of education planning have been haphazard, and have tended to focus on the quantitative aspects, by accelerating the supply of needed manpower" (*Hansohm et al. 2003*).

Institutions are not geared towards requirements of the labour market. In particular, they are strongly oriented towards paid employment opportunities, to the exclusion of self-employment. Among the underlying reasons are:

- inadequate institutional and infrastructure facilities to help create/strengthen entrepreneurial skills;
- absence of out-of-school training exposure to develop industrial skills and culture;
- lack of co-operation and interaction between industry and education institutions;
- inadequate financial incentives to encourage self-employment (*Nepru 2001*).

Education and training is an area of major deficits in the Namibian labour market. These deficits are also reflected in the fact that lack of skilled labour is mentioned as one main constraint to business expansion after lack of capital and inadequate market. More importantly, skills deficits result in a high percentage of foreign skilled labour (18% of senior officials and 14% of professionals are non-Namibians) (MLHRD 1994:33). Firm level observations suggest that real skill deficits may even be much higher than that in private business.

3.2 The Extent of Youth Unemployment in Namibia

Unemployment in Namibia does not affect all age groups the same way. Table 3 shows that the rate of unemployment in the country tends to fall consistently with age. The most affected age group is

between 15 – 19 years with the total unemployment rate of 67 per cent (broad definition), declining somewhat to 59 per cent for the next age bracket (20 – 24). By contrast, for those above 50 years the rate of broad unemployment fluctuates around 10 per cent. This pattern holds in both urban and rural areas and for females and males alike.

Table 3.1: Unemployment Rate by Age Area and Sex

Age group (Years)	Namibia			Urban			Rural		
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
<i>Broad measure of unemployment</i>									
15-19	73.5	60.4	67.0	76.0	73.8	75.0	72.2	54.7	63.2
20-24	62.5	54.9	59.1	58.9	50.0	55.0	65.3	58.5	62.2
25-29	47.8	37.3	42.8	45.5	32.6	39.3	50.2	42.4	46.6
30-34	37.1	24.8	31.3	33.4	22.4	28.0	41.0	27.9	35.2
35-39	26.7	15.4	21.6	20.5	12.8	16.9	33.7	19.0	27.4
40-44	23.4	14.6	19.1	18.8	12.2	15.2	27.2	17.5	22.9
45-49	22.7	11.3	16.7	17.3	8.6	11.9	25.6	14.1	20.4
50-54	22.6	11.8	16.6	18.6	9.8	13.3	24.7	13.3	18.7
55-59	15.5	13.5	14.4	11.0	13.3	12.6	16.7	13.6	15.2
60-64	16.5	7.6	11.4	32.3	12.5	17.9	14.3	5.9	9.9
65 and more	5.2	9.5	7.4	10.0	15.1	12.8	4.5	8.6	6.6
Total	39.0	28.3	33.8	37.2	25.4	31.3	40.4	30.8	35.9
<i>Strict measure of unemployment</i>									
15-19	56.1	43.4	49.4	69.7	65.8	68.0	44.5	32.6	37.5
20-24	42.7	41.3	42.0	47.5	44.2	45.9	37.4	38.3	37.8
25-29	31.2	28.7	29.9	34.0	28.7	31.2	27.8	28.8	28.3
30-34	21.7	17.6	19.7	25.0	19.0	22.0	17.4	15.6	16.5
35-39	11.1	11.1	11.1	12.6	9.7	11.2	9.0	13.0	10.9
40-44	8.3	9.8	9.1	12.1	10.3	11.1	4.6	9.2	6.8
45-49	8.7	5.1	6.7	11.9	6.6	8.5	6.7	3.4	5.1
50-54	7.1	7.3	7.2	10.7	7.9	9.0	4.9	6.8	6.0
55-59	3.8	5.9	5.0	6.5	10.2	9.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
60-64	1.0	4.1	2.9	0.0	11.5	9.1	1.1	1.5	1.4
65 and more	1.2	3.4	2.1	6.5	10.8	8.9	0.4	2.1	1.3
Total	21.5	19.0	20.2	27.2	21.2	24.0	16.3	16.9	16.6

Source: 2002 NLF Report, MOL

Unemployed youth merits special attention for several reasons, the most obvious of which is that youth unemployment rate exceeds the overall unemployment rate in most countries, both developed and developing (O'Higgins 1997). Another reason is that the acquisition of skills and experience of the present generation of youth is an important factor in explaining future social and economic development. Youth unemployment, especially if it is persistent, excludes an important part of the labour force from participation in the economy and thus limits the capacity for growth.

Youth unemployment is also exacerbated by the re-admission and age limits policy imposed for junior secondary education in Namibia.

Students over the age of 17 who fail grade 10 are not allowed to repeat this level in the formal educational system, but should look for alternative educational institutions, which are often too expensive for their parents to afford. Thus, many youths tend to drop out of school at this level and join the ranks of the unemployed

3.3 Causes of Youth Unemployment

One may then ask the question what are the causes of youth unemployment? This question may be answered at different levels. One might think of considering it in terms of the following:

- a) skills shortage;
- b) aggregate demand; and
- c) sizes of the youth labour force etc.

This section concentrates on skills shortage of youth in Namibia. Skills shortage/low level of education can affect the chances of employment especially among the youth. The skills level of an individual affects seriously the individual's employment prospects. Through their impact on wages, skills also contribute to determining the quality of work; skills can play a role in the growth of productivity and, therefore, in the growth of employment, which, in turn, can affect the economic growth of a country as a whole (*Mabey Salaman. and Storey 1998*). The quality of jobs young people can get, and their chances of obtaining a full-time employment depend much upon the skills they gained. Therefore, there should be certain links between the knowledge provided at schools and institutes, and current requirements in the job market (*O'Higgins 2001*).

While information is given on rates (as percentages) at which learners leave school from different grades, the labour market is often interested in the actual numbers of people who leave school and then potentially seek employment. Table 3.3 provides these numbers for 1991 through to 2000. The data for 1993 exclude learners who left schools in Walvis Bay since information was not collected from those schools before 1994. Of all school leavers, the proportions with higher levels of education have increased substantially between 1991 and 2000.

School-leaving had for many years been high in grade 10, where many learners left after writing the Junior Secondary Certificate examination. A higher percentage left after 1996 as a result of the non-repetition policy. The school leaving rates in grade 8 and, since 1997 grade 9, were higher than in grade 7, the last year of primary.

Table 3.2 provides the information of school dropouts for the years 1992 to 2000. The school dropouts are generally unacceptably higher for grade 10, the last grade of junior secondary school. This is mainly

because many school leavers either do not find places in grade 11 or their ages have reached the age restriction for repetition of grade 10.

The number of school leavers for grade 10 has increased after the policy of age restriction was introduced in 1996. The school dropouts have almost double from 29% in 1996 to 46 % in 1997. This means literally that the policy of Basic Education Sport and Culture of 1996 of grade 10 repeaters has a tremendous effect on school dropouts

The number of school dropouts has been higher since then; although the number has dropped with about three per cent in 1998, it has been higher since the implementation of the policy in 1997. One wonders what the purpose of the policy is even though it has a severe effect on the school dropouts.

This has resulted in many school-going children of ages 17 to 19 dropping out so much that is also connected with the higher unemployment rate among youth of Namibia. Children who dropout from grade 10 most of them cannot afford to attend Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) or other institutions to upgrade their grades. Their parents in most cases are very poor and cannot afford to pay for NAMCOL part time classes. As a result, they join the already high number of unemployed youth in the streets of specially towns rather than rural areas with the hope to get employment. Hence, their hopes are in vain, which normally leads to frustrations and dismay.

NAMCOL was established with the aim to assist adults who could not make it to secondary school in the past, especially grade 12. In other words, NACOL is distance-learning institution. The aim for NAMCOL was to cater for adults (normally 30 years and over) who could not attend classes with young children. Now the picture has completely changed. Nowadays, NAMCOL is for school dropouts between the ages of 17 to 25 years. About 25,000 young people are registering for NAMCOL every year to up-grade their symbols of both grade 10 and 12.

Table 3.2: School Leaving Rates in Grade 1-11 at the End of Year 1992 - 2000

Year	Grade										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Drop-out rates										
1992	9.6	5.4	3.2	5.4	7.2	5.7	9.4	11.0	9.5	21.5	7.3
1993	5.4	3.1	2.1	4.1	5.5	4.2	7.9	8.7	5.8	20.8	4.4
1994	7.3	3.1	2.4	7.0	6.3	6.8	8.9	10.2	8.6	22.6	4.5
1995	9.2	4.1	3.7	5.7	6.8	7.1	9.4	9.6	8.1	31.3	5.0
1996	3.1	2.4	2.4	4.6	5.2	6.4	8.1	9.9	8.2	29.2	5.6
1997	3.9	0.1	2.9	4.6	6.1	5.8	8.3	9.7	8.7	45.7	4.9
1998	4.9	2.2	2.4	5.4	6.8	7.0	10.2	12.2	11.7	43.1	4.9
1999	3.2	0.7	0.5	2.2	4.8	5.0	7.0	10.2	10.3	42.0	3.5
2000	2.7	0.8	1.1	0.6	5.5	5.1	7.3	10.2	10.9	38.2	3.1

Source: EMIS Statistical yearbook 2001.

The information provided by the Ministry of Labour in 2000 clearly indicated that there is a high correlation between the lower level of education and the rate of unemployment. That means people with high education are rare in the streets like the uneducated or low level of education. Therefore, the issue of high school dropouts after grade 10 is really affecting the youth of Namibia negatively. This takes us back to skills shortage. Without necessary skills or no practical experience many school dropouts find it more difficult to get jobs in

the Namibian job market. The job market prefers more mature people with basic skills, even if they happen to have low education.

Unemployment represents a terrible waste of national resources. The goods and services, which the unemployed might have produced, are lost forever. What is more, for the state the cost of unemployment does not only consist of the loss of potential income-derived taxation. It also includes the expenditure involved in social security benefits and various forms of subsidisation to assist in maintaining at least a minimum level of human dignity for those affected.

Cognizance of the cause of unemployment is fundamental to understanding its complexities and to devising effective counter measures. In this respect, one must accept that ideological inclination will influence individual approaches to causal analysis. That notwithstanding, there is wide consensus that unemployment in developing countries is caused primarily by structural factors, whereas unemployment in developed countries has in the past traditionally been associated with a downswing in the national business cycle or a temporary slump in the world economy. However, there are a sign that in the post-industrial age unemployment in these countries, too, is rapidly taking on features that are more permanent.

3.4 Consequences of Youth Unemployment

Indeed, high unemployment constitutes one of the more perplexing and stubborn predicaments facing the world's nations in the modern era. While no country is exempt from its ravages, developing countries, such as Namibia, are particularly hard hit. The vast majority of working-age (15-65years) in these societies possess but one feasible means to make a living – their labour. To them a job means having access to the basic material requisites of existence, to self-esteem, a structured living style, and being able, in whatever small way, to contribute to the well-being of the nation.

Being unemployed, or severely underemployed, means just the opposite. Instead of being an asset to society, the individual becomes a liability to family, friends and the community at large. The mental/physical strain of dependence and deprivation may eventually push the less resolute person especially youth, over the thin edge of propriety, opening the way to deviancy and crime. Those who do not succumb to such pressures, nevertheless, become increasingly demotivated and despondent to a degree where they may eventually simply give up.

Unemployment can also cause a psychological effect on individual's general well-being. Low self-esteem, self-blame and lack of confidence can negatively affect the outcome of job-seeking behaviour. For example, in a job interview the candidate may not assert him or herself in a positive manner that could reveal his or her potential (*Headley 1997*). What is clear here is that unemployed people especially youth could get stuck in a vicious cycle: i.e. the longer they stay unemployed the lower their self-esteem may become and therefore the less likely they are to perform well in job interviews.

Ullah (1990) found that those unemployed who are most actively engaged in job seeking tend to experience higher levels of depression and general psychological distress. This can lead to another vicious cycle: the more distressed the unemployed person is, the more he or she is likely to be unsuccessful in finding a job and therefore the more depressed and distressed he or she can become.

3.5 Youth Unemployment and Educational Standard

Education and training tops the priority list for action. In Namibia, educationally marginalized youth are the most vulnerable social group who are from the previously disadvantaged groups. Skills training have been equally realized as an area that addresses the high unemployment among the youth.

Literacy rates and in general national education levels have an impact on employment. Many young Namibians are faced with the declining labour market against the growing labour force in the country. Lacking the requirements for the few available job opportunities such as the necessary qualifications, experience and skills make the young people even more vulnerable to unemployment.

Low levels of formal education and lack of workplace training are to blame for the spiralling unemployment rate among Namibian youth. According to the data presented above young people accounted for 60% of the unemployed. Over half of Namibia's population of 1.8 million is younger than 25 years.

Education does not even relate to the real world of work; academic education is pursued and emphasized as though it were an end in itself, without any links to vocational/technical education. Life skills are not taught in most of our schools, and youth are left to fend for themselves in a world strange, tough and hostile.

Namibia has spent consistently large amounts on education, which is important for redressing the inequalities on the labour market. However, some shortcomings reduce the benefits of this policy:

- inefficiencies, measured in low outputs (high school failure rates),
- inappropriate priorities:
 - an attempt to provide all kinds of training regardless of scale of need, to the neglect of quality,
 - specifically a bias towards formal sector employment.

Inefficiencies are shown for example by the fact that it is not always possible to find candidates for offered scholarships. So far, efforts of education planning have been haphazard, and tended to focus on the quantitative aspects, by accelerating the supply of needed human resources (*NPC 1998 83*).

Institutions are not geared towards requirements of the labour market. In particular, they are strongly oriented at paid employment opportunities, to the exclusion of self-employment. Among the underlying reasons are (*NPC 1998a:83*).

- Inadequate institutional and infrastructure facilities to help create/strengthen entrepreneurial skills;
- Absence of out-of-school training exposure to develop industrial skills and culture;
- Lack of cooperation and interaction between industry and educational institutions
- Inadequate financial incentives to encourage self-employment.

Education and training is an area of major deficits on the Namibian labour market. These deficits are reflected in the fact that lack of skilled labour is mentioned as one main constraint to business expansion (after lack of capital and inadequate market, (*MLHRD 1994: 53*). More importantly, skills deficits result in a high percentage of foreign skilled labour - 18% of senior officials and 14% of professionals are non-Namibian (*MLHRD 1994:33*). Observations during fieldwork suggest that real skill deficits may even be much higher than that in private business.

In the absence of information on education, skill and other characteristics as well as wages of individual workers, one can hardly offer strong conclusions about the existence or otherwise of labour market segmentation and discrimination, especially when the comparison is made at broader occupation levels. However, data available to the Ministry of Labour suggest that the presence of such distortion indicating that the disadvantaged have less than proportionate access to establishments and jobs with average or above average wage levels (*MLHRD 1994:63*).

The government policy is aimed at promoting growth and employment and reducing poverty and inequality. Key instruments for achieving these aims have been high expenditure on education, health, a universal pension system, and other social services. On the other hand, measure has been taken to create employment and to redress inequality on the labour market. However, unemployment is increasing instead of declining and poverty is concentrated among the previously disadvantaged groups.

It is worth mentioning that, significant progress has been made when one compares the present to the inequitable situation of the past. However, despite all these measures to reduce unemployment in general and in particular among youth, the outcomes remains limited, due to inefficiencies in education and rigidities in the labour market.

CHAPTER FOUR

LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

4.1 Introductions

The government of independent Namibia recognized the necessity of creating employment, but also the urgent need for skilled Namibians to occupy strategic positions after the colonial period. Employment creation was given high priority in the NDP1 & II as well as Vision 2030 (it is one of main development objectives).

While youth unemployment remains a major problem that requires urgent policy attention, the government also knows that developing the capacity of youth to participate in their development has a major positive impact on long-term social and economic conditions, the well being and livelihood of future generations. The youth as a major under-utilized resource, with enormous potential to contribute to national development must be empowered to effectively participate in the national development process.

4.2 Labour Market Policies to combat unemployment

In 1990 the Ministry of Labour and Manpower Development (now the Ministry of Labour) was established. The government enacted policies and legislation aimed at furthering labour relations conducive to economic growth and improved wages and conditions of employment, through the promotion of an orderly system of free collective bargaining (NDP1 1995 129-130). This includes policies and legislations to:

- Advance persons who had been disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws and practices;

- Ensure equality of opportunity for women, particularly in relation to remuneration;
- Provide sound labour relations and fair employment practices by encouraging freedom of association by way of , inter alia, the formation of trade unions to protect workers' rights and interests, and to promote the formation of employers' organizations;
- Lay down certain obligatory minimum basic conditions of service for all employees;
- Ensure the protection of the health, safety and welfare of people at work and to prevent the abuse of child labour;
- Where possible, adhere and give effect to international labour conventions and recommendations of the International Labour Organization.

Relevant policy instruments include:

- The Labour Act (1992)
- The National Vocational Training Act (1994)
- The Social Security Act (1994)
- The Export Processing Zones Act (1995)
- The Public Service Act (1995)
- National Employment Policies (1997)
- Affirmative Action Act (1994)
- National Youth Policy (1993)
- White Paper on Labour Based Works (1997)
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Policy

The Labour Act (1992) establishes a Labour Advisory Council (tripartite) and labour courts, sets out basic conditions of employment

(including maximum working hours, overtime, annual, sick, and maternity leave), regulates the termination of contracts and unfair disciplinary actions, trade unions, employers' organizations and collective agreements. Despite some exceptions, the Act is basically valid for all employment (recently reviewed and amended). The ability of the Ministry to enforce the Act remains limited due to the small number of Labour Inspectors.

The Social Security Act (1994) stipulates that every employee has to be registered. Every registered employee is a member of the Maternity Leave, Sick Leave, and Death Benefit Fund, as well as the National Medical Benefit Fund and the National Pension Fund, unless she is a member of any other fund approved by the Minister on the recommendation of the Social Security Commission.

-The government through various ministries has attempted to reduce unemployment for example by introducing Export Processing Zones (EPZ). This programme administered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry aimed to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), to promote industrialization and transfer of technology and thus create job opportunities. Various incentives were offered to investors and the government invested substantial amounts to run the programme and to develop the EPZ infrastructure. However, instead of the 25 000 EPZ jobs that the government expected to create between 1997 and 1999 only about 400 jobs existed by 1999. Most of these jobs are of poor standards with workers being subjected to poor conditions of service and low wages.

Recently the government has come under fire from the Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI), which presented its findings on working conditions at the Ramatex factory in October 2003. Government has been urged to thoroughly review its current Export Processing Zone (EPZ) policy to ensure that the policy attracts positive

investments that will promote socio-economic development, instead of draining national resources into poor and negative investors.

A researcher at the LaRRI who conducted the study, said; enough is enough, Ramatex must start to adhere to the Labour Act, Affirmative Action Act, the Social Security Commission Act, and all collective bargaining agreements on health and safety regulations. She said Ramatex was a poor and negative investor that was exposing many young Namibians to a health hazards and making them poorer at the early stages of employment when their salaries were at their lowest (*LaRRI 2003*).

Ramatex has been accused of ignoring the country's Constitution, the Labour Act, Affirmative Action Act and the human rights of workers at the factory. Allegedly, workers at the factory do not get paid sick leave, or paid compassionate leave. "They are told to go on unpaid leave, and if they fail to report back the next day, they are fired," She said for the Labour Act to be fully implemented, the labour situation and working conditions at the Ramatex factory would first have to be straightened out.

Presenting the results of the study conducted by LaRRI on the experience of Ramatex workers, She noted that the unhealthy and unsafe conditions, including low wages and violation of workers' rights, should be addressed amicably. The Government and the trade union, including the workers at the factory, should sit around a table and sort out these issues. Ramatex is a Malaysian garments and textiles factory that has been in production since April 2003. Workers who participated in the study said they were not issued with protective clothing, which they regard as a necessity. Some claimed that many workers had developed chest problems whereas others had allergic reactions because of being exposed to the cotton dust in the factory. Work related accidents were common at Ramatex, and one of

the employees showed the researcher a damaged finger that had become permanently disabled after she was cut by a machine.

LaRRI demanded that the Environmental Impact Assessment should be made available to the public, so that all relevant stakeholders were aware of possible threats to the workers at the factory. "If such a study has not been undertaken, then it is imperative for a new study to be conducted as a matter of urgency. Such a study should at least cover the health and safety issues at Ramatex, the impact of Ramatex's usage of water on Windhoek residents, as well as the impact of possible pollution on residents living in the vicinity of the factory," LaRRI urged.

LaRRI further demanded that Ramatex to be informed in no uncertain terms by the Government and the trade union to comply with all relevant Namibian laws and regulation and to stick all collective bargaining agreements on health and safety regulations. Ramatex employs more than 5 000 workers who earn basic salaries ranging from N\$500 per month (excluding overtime) to over N\$1 000 (*LaRRI 2003*).

4.3 Cases of Fighting Youth Unemployment

Unemployed youth at the 'Oshakati Multi-Purpose Youth Centre' are of the opinion that providing a portion of land to the youth could reduce unemployment in the Oshana region. New Era spoke to four unemployed youth who all believed that if Government gave them a piece of land, they could create employment for themselves.

The group leader, a member of the Namibian Youth Enterprises for Fighting Unemployment (NYEFU), said that providing land to the youth would create a lot of employment opportunities for many unemployed youth. He said the President is always telling people to

start producing their own food instead of importing food from other countries.

The youth in the north, he said, are very eager to heed to President's call, but they do not have land to farm. The secretary of the NYEFU is blaming the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation for overlooking the youth when distributing land. They believe that the fruits and vegetables being imported from other countries are produced by youth in those countries, adding that Namibian youth could do the same if given productive land. Youth have a lot of projects, but they need assistance from the Government to make those projects success stories.

To fight unemployment, the causes of unemployment needed to be identified. He referred to the issue of learners who fail Grade 10, saying such learners should be given a second chance to repeat the grade. He said NAMCOL does not help, because it does not offer face-to-face learning. How do you expect someone who could not understand in class to understand and make it on his own. He asked. A NYEFU member said learners were also to blame for their failure, since many are not interested in learning but are more into entertainment, drinking alcohol at the local bars and shebeens.

However, NYEFU believes that a lack of educational materials in schools in the north is contributing to the high dropout and failure rate. In Oshana region, learners are sharing textbooks and few computers. Some schools, he said, do not even have computers, which make it difficult for learners to get a job when they finish school (*NewEra2004*).

You need computer skills to get a job these days. Many members of NYEFU, who passed Grade 12 in 1998, said they used to share textbooks with classmates when they were at secondary school.

They want the future government to build more schools in rural areas, because there are still many learners who walk long distances to schools and at the end of the day, they do not have enough time to do their homework, because they spend most of their time going and coming back from school. They are also urging the future government to look into moving grades 9 and 10 to combined schools. This, they said, would allow learners who passed Grade 10 at NAMCOL to continue to Grade 11, because those already in schools and moving to Grade 11 take their spaces.

Creating secondary schools with only grades 11 and 12 would reduce overcrowding in schools and give NAMCOL learners a chance to continue with their studies. Since it is time for election political parties need to focus on issues affecting the youth, especially unemployment. Youth are not motivated to take part in the elections, because their concerns are not addressed.

They noted that political parties should fulfil their election promises and try to help address the problems facing the youth. NYEFU seeks and provide jobs for the unemployed youth at Oshakati. It was started in May 2000 and has to date benefited over 297 youths through the direct labour services it provides to its clients, whether it be an individual, small or large businesses, for which they receive an income. NYEFU provides casual work to its members on a contract basis that can either be a day long to two years long. Currently the organisation has one-year cleaning contracts with the University of Namibia's Northern Campus in Oshakati. It has achieved a turnover of over N\$500 000 since its inception and expects the amount to double for the next financial year. Many of the youths spend the money on improving their grades, and supporting their families.

Another government attempt to create jobs was the incorporation of a substantial number of ex-combatants into various departments, i.e.

the defence force, police and security. This was major success attempt to create jobs for about 9 000 ex-combatant. Economic reintegration has not been easy for the ex-combatants. For many of them, lack of access to land was a serious problem. The ex-combatants are men and women whom during the liberation struggle did not get chance to study, as a result, they have no practical skills or qualification.

After independence, many former soldiers failed to reintegrate economically. In response to protests from the ex-soldiers, the government designed a number of ad hoc activities. As a result, the Namibian demobilization and reintegration program is more like a patchwork of program responses. In early 1996, the government redesigned the reintegration component.

The reintegration program included employment support, rehabilitation and resettlement programs, and vocational training. In the employment support program, the government employed some ex-combatants in the new army and the reformed police forces. The private sector also employed few ex-combatants. The rehabilitation program was available to disabled ex-combatants as a way to assist them to find jobs through income generating activities. So far, the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation (MLRR) has established six income-generating projects. The assistance is extended for four or more years with a focus on resettlement, thereby creating communities around the disabled. The Development Brigade established in 1991 offered practical training courses to the ex-combatants. This organization has later started to acquire land for its own Brigade resettlement scheme, which enables graduates from agricultural courses to become commercial farmers.

4.4 Youth Unemployment and Political Parties

So far, political parties election manifestoes of 2004 do not say much on unemployment and especially youth unemployment in the country and how they are going to deal with the problem. SWANU is the only party, which has addressed youth unemployment in its manifesto, and promised to find a solution to youth unemployment. SWAPO's election manifesto has promised job creation as the priority of the SWAPO government. "Economic growth and job creation would continue to be the top priorities of the SWAPO PARTY government over the next five years and beyond" (*SWAPO Manifesto 2004*). Many young people think that if they vote another political party on power, their problem of job creation and job opportunities will be solved. Hence, political parties are there to campaign for voters to be in their favour during election campaign.

4.5 Active Labour Market Policies

Active labour market policies have been defined by the ILO as policies which "provide work to, or increase the employability of, people with certain disadvantages in the labour market" (ILO 1992). A later definition broadens the scope and purpose of active labour market policies to encompass all workers, and not mainly disadvantage workers (*ILO 1993*). However, regardless of the scope of the definitions and programmes falls under the heading of active labour market policies. The focus of this section will therefore be more specifically on public employment services that may provide various services, in particular placement, to the youth in their search for employment.

According to Article 6 of the ILO Convention No. 88 (1948) on the Organisation of Employment Services, these services have three major tasks: placement, vocational information and guidance, and labour market information. Public employment Services (PES) can play a crucial role within the labour markets.

As a provider of regularly collected, comprehensive and up-to-date labour market information they could be the focal point for the shaping of labour market policies and programme. Within services like information dissemination on occupations, training institutions and self-employment opportunities, they could attract a broad range of interested job seekers, in particular the youth. Other governmental institutions might also have a strong interest in this information. Close contact with employers and their business associations would not only increase the number of notified vacancies but it would also enable the employment services to become a major partner in personnel planning and development. Employment services could thereby build a strong link with the private sector from which both sides would benefit. Vocational guidance and individual counselling activities would complete the picture of the modern PES.

Unfortunately, however, the situation as described above does not match reality in Anglophone African countries, as a recently ILO study found (*Schultz and Klemmer 1998*). Very few countries provide reasonably good services, while in others the services are merely noticed by the public or the government institutions. The insufficient capacity of Public Employment Services and related institutional and administrative infrastructure hampers the design and implementation of labour market policies and programmes required to facilitate market-oriented reform.

Many of the PES in Anglophone African have always been operating on a very low level of human and financial resources. Structural adjustment programmes have additionally reduced the resources, often to a level below the very basic needs to keep up a minimum services of core functions. Public Employment Services with only one officer are quite common in English-speaking Africa. With a few exceptions, most of the PES only offer registration services and

perform poorly in their traditional placement function. Under the present economic conditions in much of Africa there are very few job vacancies available, and even fewer are notified to the PES as this is either not mandatory or not enforced. Suffering from little support within the government and unable to keep pace with developments in the private sector, the PES are increasingly under pressure and have already ceased to exist in some countries.

Schultz and Klemmer (1998), make proposals for the reorganization of PES that are likely to be relevant to most English-speaking African countries. They are aimed at the evolution of the existing PES towards a stage in their institutional development at which a basic level of fully functioning modern employment services is reached. The challenge remains to develop and reform PES by using little more than the resources currently allocated to them. Under this condition, organizational changes plays and important role.

A modern set-up concentrating on task like information dissemination on occupations, training . Many of the PES in Anglophone African have always been operating on a very low level of human and financial resources. Structural adjustment programmes have additionally reduced the resources, often to a level below the very basic needs to keep up a minimum services of core functions. Public Employment Services with only one officer are quite common in English-speaking Africa. With a few exceptions, most of the PES only offer registration services and perform poorly in their traditional placement function. Under the present economic conditions in much of Africa there are very few job vacancies available, and even fewer are notified to the PES as this is either not mandatory or not enforced. Suffering from little support within the government and unable to keep pace with developments in the private sector, the PES are increasingly under pressure and have already ceased to exist in some countries.

4.6 Education and Training

The government has embarked upon programmes that will endure that the lack of education will not be the cause of unemployment in 20 years from now. Many companies prefer to recruit skilled or at least semi-skilled workers rather than investing in training programmes. Another problem was (and still is) the highly academic curriculum which is often of little practical value when school leavers enter the labour market. Education (policy, administration and institutional development) is therefore a priority for the long-term development of Namibia. Consequently:

- More schools have been built in different parts of the country, especially in the rural areas and other remote places, with the aim of bringing education closer to the people and increasing accessibility. At independence, Namibia had 1153 schools the number has risen to more than 2900 schools to date.
- The Ministry of education has a bursary scheme, which was recently changed to a study loan scheme to assist learners to further their studies in tertiary institutions.
- The government subsidises the local university and polytechnic to produce skilled scientists, administrators and technocrats for the country.
- Teachers colleges and vocational training institutions are also heavily subsidized and monitored, in order to produce well-qualified teachers and skilled artisans.

But all these programmes need to be well implemented, monitored, and co-ordinated with the economic development plans to prevent

situations like in Zambia and Zimbabwe where people with tertiary qualifications are unemployed or under-employed.

It is very worrying to note that, despite huge financial investments in education, the quality has often remained poor. High failure rates are still more the rule than the exception in many regions and at the vocational training schools.

Another attempt to tackle the unemployment problem has been undertaken by the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence. They introduced a Youth Development Programme to absorb school leavers and integrate them into different institutions after undergoing military training and completing community service. The Ministry has established the Directorate of Youth Development with the aim to provide an operational framework with a set of realistic guidelines, from which, action programmes and services can be developed to facilitate meaningful involvement of youth in national development efforts and to respond their various needs (*MHTEC 1998*).

The Directorate has established Youth Development Centres throughout the country.

The above-mentioned government activities are calculated moves by the state to prevent future unemployment among the current student population and the youth at schools. The involvement of labour market institutions in the process of economic reform is limited, due to two principal factors. Firstly, the institutions do not yet represent the social partners in their totality, and secondly this capacity of economic policy analysis is itself limited. However, significant progress has been made when one compares the present to the inequitable situation in the past.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The youth unemployment situation has not improved in the past years. Whatever their merits, the economic policies of the government in recent years have not been sufficiently employment friendly to make a dent in the rate of youth unemployment. The seriousness of the situation cannot be over-emphasized.

Problems and aspirations of young people as an important population group must be given due consideration in the development agenda of the country. As youth is not a homogenous group, its needs and experiences differ depending on age, gender, ethnicity, disability, social class and status, household size, access to education and training as well as the state of development of the region in which they live. All these factors affect education and labour market opportunities of young people. Thus, effective youth policies and programs need to be closely targeted to take account of these specific differences and needs.

The main problem young people face nowadays is unemployment. This study proves that, among other factors, youth unemployment depends much upon the general economic situation in a country. Therefore, all policies should be based on economic measures, which aim to promote economic growth, structural adjustment and demand for labour. "Within the framework of economic and social policies, labour market policies have an important role to play: they should strengthen them by promoting an appropriate reallocation of labour, increasing the flexibility and mobility of workers, reducing skill mismatches, and preventing (or at least moderating) marginalization of disadvantaged social groups.

Their success, however, crucially depends on their consistency and coordination with the wider policy framework, on their internal coherence, on the experience and motivation of the staff of labour market institutions, and on their cooperation with all the other institutions involved – the various departments and levels of government, employers, trade unions, NGOs and others” (ILO 1997:93).

Another important factor affecting youth unemployment is the level of education. The higher the investments in education the higher is the well-being of a nation. These investments made in education, in the formation of a qualified labour force, can contribute much to the formulation of more balanced and sustainable development. The high school drop outs and school leavers after grade 10, due to the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture’s policy of age restriction of 1996 has a tremendous effect on youth unemployment and is generally unacceptable.

The role of Government in the development process remains crucial. The government has to take a wide range of useful initiatives in influencing public policy to support youth employment; manpower agencies should be set up in private and public sectors; educational institutions and trade unions can also play an important role in providing young people with essential information and any possible assistance (Adam and Wilson 1994).

The importance of addressing the problem of youth unemployment should be a priority objective of general economic, labour market and educational policies. The society pays a high price if large groups of young people are excluded from education or a labour market at this young age. Disbelief of youth in social justice and in their future affects negatively their attitude towards the country, society and basic

human values. Unemployment and financial insecurity among the young unemployed are major obstacles on the path from adolescence to adulthood, when hopes for setting up a household and raising a family depend on gainful employment.

The problem of unemployed youth, if left unsolved, can form a serious threat to the future of our common society and in particular our young democracy. Patterns of behaviour and features of character form at early age, hence failures and problems with employment in this period of life can seriously affect young people's beliefs and hopes in the future. Societies with high levels of youth unemployment may face drug abuse, vandalism and crime, with dissatisfied young people as the driving force. These problems require a timely solution as well as special attention and care to the lives of young people and their successful socialization.

The youth problem of unemployment should not be seen as an incidental or special anomaly of an otherwise employment friendly environment, but as a manifestation of the overall structural problem, that affects adults as well as youth. This is of course not to deny the fact that, as we have seen, the problem of youth unemployment and underemployment is generally more severe than that of adults due to certain youth-specific factors and constraints (relating to age, education, ect.) that need to be addressed as well.

The point rather is that from a policy standpoint, policies aimed at enhancing the welfare and employability of youth should preferably be undertaken in the broader context of policies aimed at enhancing the overall labour absorption capacity of the Namibian economy. Many of the current employment promotion policies, interventions and programmes are not targeted solely at the youth, but they are no less relevant than those aimed specifically at them.

5.2 Recommendations

The rate of unemployment in Namibia may be very high, but it is still higher for the younger members of the labour force. The reasons have to do with their low educational qualifications and lack of marketable skills and job experience. Under these circumstances, the acquisition of skills through programmes involving vocational and on-the-job training assumes greater importance. The seriousness of the situation calls for urgent intervention. Relaxation of admission requirements to vocational training institutions is a quintessential, though not sufficient, element for drawing the youth and the less educated into the country's mainstream economic activities.

There is a pertinent need for a thorough assessment of the gap between vocational skills training and the market demand coupled with the spreading of accessible vocational training institutions, particularly in rural areas where poverty and inequality is extremely high.

There is a clear need for a thorough assessment of past policies and their failure to generate youth employment. All the social partners need to join forces to devise more effective policies for job creation, which should be regarded as a national priority of the highest order. Consideration should be given to whether the present institutional structures are the most conducive to the emergence of an employment friendly environment and the formulation and implementation of appropriate job-creating policies.

The rate of unemployment for those with post-secondary education is very low. The unemployment of those with higher education is essentially frictional. The labour markets clearly demand and can absorb labour with higher education and skills. Greater investment in institutions of higher learning in the country is certainly called for and

justified, especially for the younger generation. Further justification lies in history of lack of access to education and training in Namibia.

Youth programmes, represent one of the few examples of active labour market programmes that have been tried in several sub-Saharan African countries. Such programmes would usually target the openly unemployed and incorporate a training element, or some assistance in getting started in self-employment. The various schemes, known as national youth service, or brigades, or under any other name, have come and gone, however. In quite a number of countries, including Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia, efforts have been made over the years to improve the links between education and training systems, on the one hand, and the world of work, on the other.

But in the end, no doubt because there turned out to be only so many jobs, or not enough opportunities for self-employment, the effectiveness of these policies, at least at the national level, has been very limited. In other words, they have nowhere succeeded in bringing unemployment rates down.

For labour markets to function properly, and for jobs to be created so that poverty may be alleviated, social stability and employment-intensive economic growth are essential conditions. In this context, human resources development assumes critical proportions. Beyond basic education, massive numbers of people should be equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help them to make a decent living, even if it is in micro enterprises of the informal sector variety. In as much as poverty reduction depends on growth as well as income distribution, employment and training policies may represent options, namely for many to progress gradually, or for a few to progress a lot. In addition, where markets of any kind are typically distorted, governments may have to step in to ensure equity.

From a training perspective, it should not be taken for granted why people should be trained, with government support that is. Nor should one have a narrow view of the potential clientele of training systems. As things stand, it is difficult to grasp, for example, why not more is done in targeting low and declining productivity in agriculture, the sector in which most Namibian people work, and Namibian women in particular. In addition, it is far from clear, in many countries, why governments keep investing their scarce resources in pre-employment training for sectors that are not hiring, while people, who have no choice but to create their own employment, pay dearly to private providers that surely not always up to the task.

In addressing youth unemployment and other crucial questions, for example with a view to formulating explicit employment promotion policies, there is a lot of prior work to be done in order to understand better the realities of local labour markets. Labour market information system is defective in Namibia and should, ideally, be strengthened so that issues and opportunities are recognized, and dealt with, as they arise.

That being said, Namibia cannot wait for statistics to be plentiful and perfect before acting to redress major problems. Fortunately, the intimate knowledge of insiders, good will and common sense, may often substitute for data that are missing or flawed. It is no doubt more important for governments to recognize the strategic importance of employment in reducing poverty, than to know exactly, for example, how many people are unemployed, if indeed it is clear to all what is meant by being unemployed.

The most important issues to deal with when addressing youth unemployment are to:

- Get away with the notion of one being employed in offices, factories, mines etc. Youths should think of creating jobs for themselves
- Incorporate technical or vocational training in secondary curriculum because, the education provided from primary school to secondary school does not equip the student with technical skills that could form the basis for engaging in small industrial production activities.
- Owing to the recent colonial past that excludes the majority of its population from access to proper education, in Namibia, education especially, needs to play a central role in combating unemployment (although education alone does not create workplaces and employment).
- The education sector has the responsibility to prepare young minds for employment, but also the duty to infuse the same young minds with necessary skills to find employment or even to become entrepreneurs and employers to themselves. Perhaps volunteer work and internships could be promoted during the years of school education in order to acquaint future school leavers with the employment sector, and the employers with possible job candidates.

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