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Youth Unemployment Crises in Sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring Structural Similarities

A Research Report submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Commerce (Applied Development Economics)

in the School of Economics and Finance,

University of the Witwatersrand by

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Definitions and Concepts

These terms are referred to throughout this paper. Their definitions have been taken from various ILO documentation and guidelines. Some of these terms refer to indicators that the ILO has classified as being "Key Indicators of the Labour Market" (KILM)

Contributing Family Workers: workers who hold "self-employment jobs" as own-account workers in a market-oriented establishment operated by a related person living in the same household.

Discouraged Job Seekers: persons who have left the labour market because they are "discouraged", that is, because they feel that no suitable work is available or that they do not have the proper qualifications, or because they do not know where to look for work.

Educational attainment and illiteracy (Key Labour Market Indicator 14): Information on levels of educational attainment is currently the best available indicator of labour force skill levels.

Employment: comprises all persons of working age who during a specified brief period, such as one week or one day, were in the following categories: a) paid; or b) self-employed.

Employment-to-Population Ratio (Key Labour Market Indicator 2): The employment-to-population ratio is defined as the proportion of a country's working-age population that is employed. A high ratio means that a large proportion of a country's population is employed, while a low ratio means that a large share of the population is not involved directly in labour market-related activities.

Employment by sector (Key Labour Market Indicator 4): This indicator disaggregates employment into three broad sectors – agriculture, industry and services – and expresses each as a % age of total employment.

Employment in the informal economy (Key Labour Market Indicator 8): Work in the informal economy is generally recognized as entailing absence of legal identity, poor working conditions, lack of membership in social protection systems, higher incidence of work-related accidents and ailments, and limited freedom of association.

Labour Force: comprises all persons of working age who furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services during a specified time-reference period. It refers to the sum of all persons of working age who are employed and those who are unemployed.

Labour force participation rate (Key Labour Market Indicator 1): is a measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or by looking for work. It is the number of persons in the labour force as a %age of the working-age population.

Long-term unemployment (Key Labour Market Indicator 11): there are two separate measures of long-term unemployment: (a) those unemployed for one year or more as a %age of the labour force; and (b) those unemployed for one year or more as a %age of the total unemployed (the incidence of long-term unemployment).

Persons outside the labour force (Key Labour Market Indicator 13): The inactivity rate is defined as the % age of the population that is neither working nor seeking work (that is, not in the labour force).

Status in employment (Key Labour Market Indicator 3): Indicators of status in employment distinguish between the two main categories of the employed: (1) employees (also known as wage and salaried workers) and (2) the self-employed. The self-employed are further disaggregated into (a) employers, (b) own-account workers, (c) members of producers' cooperatives, and (d) contributing family workers.

Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET): the share of youth – persons aged 15-24 - not in education, employment or training (also known as "the NEET rate") conveys the number of young persons not in education, employment or training as a %age of the total youth population.

Own Account Workers: those workers who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, hold the type of jobs defined as "self-employment jobs", and have not engaged on a continuous basis any employees to work for them.

Time-related underemployment (Key Labour Market Indicator 12): reflects underutilization of the productive capacity of the labour force. The indicator is calculated as time-related underemployment as a %age of total employment.

Unemployment (Key Labour Market Indicator 9): comprises all persons of working age who during the reference period, were without work, currently available for work and seeking work. However, it should be recognised that national definitions and coverage of unemployment can vary with regard to factors such as age limits, criteria for seeking work, and treatment of, for example, persons temporarily laid off, discouraged about job prospects or seeking work for the first time.

Unemployment Rate: is calculated by expressing the number of unemployed persons as a % age of the total number of persons in the labour force. The unemployment rate is a useful measure of the underutilisation of the labour supply. It reflects the inability of an economy to generate employment for those persons who want to work but are not doing so, even though they are available for employment and actively seeking work. It is thus seen as an indicator of the efficiency and effectiveness of an economy to absorb its labour force and of the performance of the labour market.

Expanded/Broad Unemployment: the number of unemployed persons as a %age of the total number of persons in the labour force, including those who are discouraged workers (ie: are available and want to work, but have given up looking for work).

Narrow/Strict Unemployment: the number of unemployed persons as a %age of the total number of persons in the labour force.

The Expanded definition includes discouraged workers, whom the ILO currently classify as being part of the "potential labour force." The ILO thus uses the narrow/strict definition as its default standard of reporting.

Working Age Population: refers to persons of working age, which is commonly defined as those aged 15 years and older, but this may vary from country to country based on national laws and practices (some countries also apply an upper age limit).

Youth unemployment (Key Labour Market Indicator 10): For the purpose of this indicator, the term “youth” covers persons aged 15−24, while “adults” are defined as persons aged 25 and over, although national variations in age definitions do occur. The indicator presents youth unemployment in the following four ways: (a) the youth unemployment rate; (b) the ratio of the youth unemployment rate to the adult unemployment rate; (c) the youth share in total unemployment; and (d) youth unemployment as a proportion of the youth population.

definitions taken from International Labour Organization, 2016; International Labour Organization, 2022.

1 Introduction

1.1 Objective and Justification

The objective of this research report is to identify the effect of neoliberal policies in addressing structural drivers of youth unemployment in South Africa. This objective is pursued by conducting a comparative analysis between South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda. The comparison is intended to identify structural similarities in each country, and to further explore the labour market policies which have sought to address these structural issues. This topic of study is relevant to my research as a young South African, who is concerned about the stubbornly high youth unemployment rate and its consequent social ills. While the South African youth unemployment rate is known to be alarmingly high, policy suggestions seem feeble in the face of underlying causes. Surface-level proposals like improving job readiness are widespread but do not address the structural nature of unemployment. It is possible to conduct an analysis of democratic South Africa's policy trajectory and identify its effect on structural youth unemployment. However, this report compares the South African case to that of Ghana and Uganda in order to understand the effects of neoliberal policies in various contexts and applications.

This topic warrants research for multiple reasons. Firstly, a country's rate of unemployment is an important economic indicator with important linkages to other aspects of the economy. Fundamentally a labour market issue, various theories expand on how unemployment is related to overall economic activity (Keynes, 1936), its implications for poverty (United Nations, 2005), and the general relationship between unemployment and other social ills. Secondly, youth unemployment warrants particular attention because of its long-term implications for the labour market, upward mobility, migration, and social unrest (O'Higgins, 1997). South Africa's high youth unemployment rate makes this topic especially relevant. Thirdly, a comparative analysis enables the effects of ideologically similar policies to be identified, which is useful in understanding patterns, shared influences, and common outcomes. The context of high youth unemployment rates in Southern African countries and the relatively young population in sub-Saharan Africa allows for a geographical grounding of the topic (Fox & Gandhi, 2021). While Ghana and Uganda have significantly lower rates of youth unemployment than South Africa, each country has expressed concern with the structural problem of occupational and educational mismatch (Baah-Boateng, 2013; Magelah & Ntambirweki-Karugonjo, 2014). The comparison can highlight similarities in the causes of high youth unemployment, the policies which have been used to address this, the sources of these policies, as well as their effects. Fourthly, it is expected that this comparative work, while providing similarities, will also uncover important differences between the studied countries. In so doing, the myth of African homogeneity will be exposed, and the importance of context-specific analysis and policymaking will be reiterated.

The high rate of structural youth unemployment in South Africa requires a multi-pronged resolution strategy. The social effects of high levels of youth unemployment impose an urgent need for coordinated policy. These include unemployment's implications for human rights and economic development. These social effects should be addressed but effectively addressing them requires a better understanding of the fundamental problem. This research paper thus tries to understand the problem of structural unemployment as an initial priority. In trying to

understand this problem, the persistence of structural youth unemployment is framed against past policy approaches. Particularly, this research paper seeks to investigate the effects of neoliberal policies and a neoliberal policy approach on structural youth unemployment.

1.2 Research Questions

This research report seeks to answer the following three research questions: What characterises structural youth unemployment in South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda? Which labour market policies have been introduced in each country, and what have they proposed to address high structural youth unemployment? To what extent do these policies have a neoliberal character? What has been the effect of these policies in each country and how are they different or similar comparatively?

1.3 Layout

This research report is divided into 6 sections, with Section 1 being the introduction.

Section 2 contains the literature review which provides various theoretical frameworks for understanding unemployment, presents an overview of neoclassical economics and its link to neoliberalism, and dives into how structural youth unemployment manifests in the selected countries.

Section 3 outlines the research methodology and accompanying data. It explains the relevance of the comparative case study methodology for this report. A description of the data then follows, with further detail provided on data sources and limitations. This section also details how elements of neoliberalism will be identified in the policy analysis, and how their effects will be studied.

Section 4 uses the selected data and, against the backdrop of the relevant literature, presents a case study for each country. These case studies are laid out in country profiles which provide unemployment statistics and details each country's labour policy trajectory.

Section 5 presents the discussion and findings of the case studies, comparatively synthesising each country's key findings. The discussion section ties the literature to the findings, providing a deeper layer of analysis. Section 5 answers the research questions, providing responses to the report's hypotheses.

Section 6 concludes the report, summarising the findings and insights of the comparative study.

2 Literature Review

Due to the multiple areas of interest presented in this dissertation, the literature review explores how different theoretical frameworks approach the problem of unemployment as an initial step. The literature review intends to lay out the theoretical framing of unemployment in classical,

neoclassical, Keynesian, and heterodox economics. Thereafter, a justification for selecting a structural analysis of unemployment will be provided. Given the demographic trends in sub-Saharan Africa, this paper will also present a review of the literature regarding youth unemployment. Once the theoretical frameworks have been set out, the literature review will probe neoliberalism and economic policy, and particularly the implementation of neoliberalism in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, a brief overview of the similarities and differences between the three countries will be provided, with a substantive comparison in the following chapter.

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks regarding unemployment

Classical Economics and Voluntary/Frictional Unemployment

The classical economic framework assumes that the economy tends to full employment and therefore all unemployment is voluntary. Classical economics is founded upon the theory devised by Jean-Baptiste Say (1803) which posits that demand is created by supply. Classical economics assumes equilibrium in labour markets and therefore supports the assumption that the economy tends toward "full employment," which has implications for the way unemployment is understood (Morgan, 1978, p. 13). If, in a market economy with flexible wages, the labour market continuously adjusts to equilibrium then full employment is reached at this equilibrium. This classical model allows only for frictional, voluntary unemployment which is inherently short term (Hagen, 1966, p. 3). Where unemployment lingers, it is voluntary, specifically chosen by the labourer who stubbornly demands a wage higher than the equilibrium (ibid, p. 13). When a labourer adheres to the logic of the classical model, they will accept the equilibrium wage. Therefore, classical economists view all unemployment as a supply-side issue, arising due to a labourer's choice to reject the prevailing wage.

Proponents of classical economics, including Adam Smith (1776), James Mill (1808), David Ricardo (1817), John Stuart Mill (1844), and Arthur Pigou (1943) conclude that unemployment policy is unnecessary. Classical models assume that there is no demand for "money" itself but rather only a demand for goods. Money then, is only a means of exchange. Simply put, labour will work for wages in order to fund their consumption. Where wages are higher than the planned consumption, excess money will be loaned out at the prevailing rate of interest (Morgan, 1978, p. 14). Once the interest rate and wage mechanisms are allowed to work in a competitive economy, markets will clear and equilibrium will be reached at the point of full employment (Blatt, 1981, p. 552). The logical conclusion of this model of employment is that any disequilibrium (unemployment) is purely voluntary and either reflects sticky wages or shifts to other jobs. If all unemployment is voluntary and the market is expected to self-adjust to a new equilibrium, then unemployment policy is unnecessary because there is no long-term problem to rectify.

Keynesian Economics and Involuntary/Cyclical Unemployment

The Keynesian conception of unemployment stands in opposition to the classical notion, instead theorising the existence of involuntary unemployment (Keynes, 1936, p. 12). The economic distress of the Great Depression (1929-1939) undermined the theory of unemployment as voluntary. As Europe and America experienced extreme levels of unemployment, re-theorisations by post-classical economists began to emerge (Shackle, 1972), with Keynes a pivotal example of this. The Keynesian model of unemployment posits that goods market equilibrium can be found at a level of employment lower than full employment.

In this instance, unemployment is not caused by money wages that are too high, but instead due to other factors in the economic cycle. This allows for the possibility of involuntary unemployment, in opposition to the classical notion.

Keynes' model of unemployment rejects the classical claim that supply creates its own demand. Instead, Keynes posits that involuntary unemployment can occur due to insufficient aggregate demand in the economy (Morgan, 1978, p. 43). According to the Keynesian theory, higher levels of unemployment are explicitly related to economic downturns and economic contraction. Keynes asserted that the cyclical nature of economic "booms and slumps" corresponds to "the marginal efficiency of capital" (Keynes, 1936, p. 108). This relationship is cyclical because of its recurring, time-sensitive nature and its ability to be mediated by short-term responses in the economy. Namely, the relatively higher level of unemployment and the lower rate of savings. This gives rise to the term "cyclical unemployment," which refers to unemployment that is longer-term than frictional unemployment and is involuntary because it arises from trade cycles and economic performance unrelated to the individual labourer's wage preferences. Therefore, the supply of labour does not necessarily create an equal demand for labour. Keynes therefore presents a demand-side framing of unemployment.

A Keynesian approach to unemployment has implications for unemployment policy. If the underlying cause of the unemployment is demand-driven, then its persistence can be alleviated through the appropriate government policy of "[inducing] households and firms to increase their planned demand for goods," (Morgan, 1978, p. 43).

Structural Unemployment

Structural unemployment, a relatively newer theorising of unemployment, offers different explanations for long-term unemployment that does not correspond to cyclical or frictional unemployment. Structural unemployment deals with "the persistent imbalance between the supply and demand for labour" (Layard et al., 2005, p. 286). The starting point for structural analysis is the observed inequality between unemployment between various groups of workers. Essentially, this analysis asks why certain groups experience different levels of unemployment over the long term. This framework is more concerned with understanding the economic structure and its relation to unemployment, as opposed to worker's wage preferences or business cycles.

A structural analysis of unemployment is concerned with four broad elements of the economy: occupational, regional, industrial, and demographic characteristics (Layard et al. 2005). Occupational differences reflect the most evident difference in rates of unemployment with semi-, low- and un-skilled workers experiencing greater rates of unemployment than professional workers (ibid., p. 287). This is fundamentally a question of skills, training, and education of labourers in relation to available jobs in the economy. Regional differences are also observable, with unemployment rates varying "between and within regions" (ibid., p. 288). This encompasses problems emerging from spatial distribution, transport and places of work. Industrial differences refer to sectoral differences – instances where different industries have notably different unemployment rates. An industrial difference in unemployment is related to industrial shifts and economic restructuring (ibid., p. 295). Finally, demographic differences relate to observed rates of unemployment that differ according to age, race, and gender (ibid., p. 298). This includes unemployment trends across racialised groups, gendered differences in unemployment rates, and the general trend that youth unemployment is higher than

unemployment amongst other adults. Structural unemployment is therefore a framework which analyses various elements of the economy to explain longer-term unemployment trends.

Utilising a structural analysis of unemployment presents various options in terms of policy, depending on the findings of the analysis. A structural unemployment analysis aims first to understand the magnitude of the abovementioned four differences, then to further probe why these differences occur, and thus how they can be mediated. While frictional unemployment proposes no policy and cyclical unemployment prescribes counter-cyclical policy, theories of structural unemployment present different policy considerations depending on the diagnosis. The long-term nature of structurally-caused unemployment often requires a concerted effort to break the persistence of the trend. Structural causes rarely resolve themselves and thus require careful analysis to form the basis for well devised interventions. Unemployment thus explicitly relates to labour market conditions and is shaped by other features of the broader economy. Therefore, a structural analysis will propose a different mix of policies depending on the context.

Neoclassical Economics

Neoclassical economics is derived from classical economic thought but centres utility theory and marginal analysis. Neoclassical economics can be understood as based on three methodological axioms: methodological individualism, methodological instrumentalism, and methodological equilibration (Arnsperger & Varoufakis, 2006, pp. 7-10). Individualism here refers to the preoccupation with analysing socioeconomic conditions at the individual agent level (ibid., p. 8). Instrumentalism refers to the agent's (homo economicus) behaviour as being an instrument toward achieving a particular preference-based outcome (ibid., p. 10). Equilibration is the axiomatically self-imposed insistence that an equilibrium exists, against which all economic phenomena should be analysed (ibid., p. 11). These axioms underpin the main tools of neoclassical economics – utility theory and marginal analysis as popularised by Alfred Marshall (1890) and others. Utility theory is captured in methodological individualism and instrumentalism, while marginal analysis is only possible if an equilibrium is assumed. Neoclassical economics is fundamentally concerned with the distribution of scarce resources in society, claiming that the 'optimal outcome' (equilibrium) is reached only if everyone is free to exchange resources in the unregulated economy. The underlying assumption is that actors are rational, and therefore if allowed to maximise their utility, their actions will lead to a market equilibrium (Boerger, 2016). This focus on marginal analysis has led to neoclassical economics relying heavily on representing the economy and its equilibria through mathematical models. Thus, the inclusion of utility theory and marginal analysis in neoclassical economics makes it distinct from classical economics.

In its quest to respond to various historical moments and empirical data, neoclassical theory is ever-evolving and non-monolithic. This is clear in the case of neoclassical labour economics, where the fundamentals of neoclassical economics are integrated with various other insights including those from institutional economics, as explained by Boyer and Smith (2001). To explain an economy experiencing unemployment despite being at the desired level of equilibrium, Stigler (1962) developed the theory of job search, which posits that under certain conditions, it may be rational for a worker to choose unemployment (Boyer and Smith, 2001, p. 210). This was an expansion of classical theory of voluntary unemployment, but with the possibility of market equilibrium in the presence of unemployment. Empirical evidence regarding the existence of wage differentials compelled neoclassical labour economists to analyse wage-setting dynamics beyond the market and led to theory of efficiency wages.

Efficiency wages are theorised to explain differences between the primary and secondary market wage-setting behaviour (dual labour market), attributing the difference to the relationship between wages and productivity in a particular sector (ibid., p. 214). These revisions to neoclassical theory have occurred as responses to real-life data that contradicted initial neoclassical theories but have not been universally adopted by all neoclassical economists (Kaufman, 2008, p. 32). These developments show the reactionary and varied nature of neoclassical economics.

Neoclassical labour economics proposes various labour market policies to achieve the desired equilibrium conditions. Boyer and Smith (2001) identify that neoclassical labour economists were initially drawn to studying human capital, developing theories around education and skills training (Boyer and Smith, p. 216). This culminated in a neoclassical analysis of education policy and government training programmes. Later neoclassical economists sought to analyse various demographic factors in relation to labour including race, gender, and immigration (ibid.,) given the changes in the work force after World War Two. Given the challenges posed to early neoclassical economics, the revisions sough to incorporate more practical and applied methods to neoclassical labour economics. These examples illustrate the growing involvement of neoclassical economics with policy questions, particularly the question of public policy.

Heterodox Economics

A heterodox approach to unemployment will encompass all approaches that are not neoclassical and/or Keynesian. Specific alternatives that should be considered here is a Marxist approach to unemployment and a feminist approach to unemployment. These are chosen to illustrate the breadth of conceptualisations of unemployment, of which neoclassical economics is merely one of many. A Marxist understanding of unemployment views unemployment as a necessary component of capitalism, comprising what is referred to as "the reserve industrial army" or a reserve army of labour (Marx, 1867, p. 440). Using a feminist political economy lens, Sibeko (2024) details how black African women bear the brunt of unemployment in South Africa (Sibeko, 2024, p. 68). Sibeko (2024)'s analysis further expands on how feminised unpaid care work subsidises the capitalist economy (ibid, p. 66). These conceptions of unemployment have different implications for unemployment policy, standing in contrast to laissez-faire and countercyclical policy. A further lens through which to understand the role of the state, is the developmental state literature. Johnson (1982) popularised the term 'developmental state' to refer to a state-led development project, which prioritises economic growth and technical progress. A developmental state is one which assumes the duty of industrialisation in a planned, coordinated manner, with clear goals and strategies (Johnson, 1982, p. 19). Johnson's developmental state is not merely concerned with regulatory functions but plays the leading role in investing in national industrial projects (ibid). In this context, a developmental state identifies key national priorities and proceeds with interventions to achieve these goals. To address unemployment, a developmental state would pursue labour policy akin to countercyclical Keynesian policy, but with a longer-term approach to industrialisation.

Youth Unemployment

Given South Africa's historical context, the structural unemployment approach is the most suitable framework for understanding labour dynamics in the country. This research paper focuses on the effects of policy in addressing structural unemployment. The structural unemployment framework allows an enquiry into the four dimensions of occupational, regional, industrial, and demographic characteristics. This research choice is informed by the

long-term nature of South Africa's youth unemployment and the context of past labour and educational policies under the apartheid regime. Apartheid-era policies have had significant effects on all four categories of the structural unemployment framework. Occupational elements of unemployment in South Africa are linked to educational mismatch discourse. Regional elements of unemployment are related to apartheid-era spatial dynamics. Industrial elements of unemployment are represented by South Africa's sectorial composition. Demographic elements of unemployment in South Africa are consequences of apartheid's racial and gendered discrimination. Therefore, a structural analysis of South Africa's unemployment is required in order to understand the current predicament.

Using the structural unemployment framework, this research paper has a particular focus on the youth demographic given its relevance in South Africa. This is relevant because of the increasing proportion of youth in the population of South Africa, with 34% of the population comprising youth, defined as age 15-34 (Maluleke, 2022). Additionally, the youth unemployment rate is higher than the national average (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The continent shows similar patterns with a median age of 20 years old, while high rates of youth unemployment is a concern for the Global South in general (S4YE, 2015 & Akileswaran, Mazumdar, & Perez Albertos, 2023). Youth unemployment warrants probing due to its relatively high rate in South Africa and its "significant social and economic costs," including increased vulnerability to poverty; limited skills development; high likelihood of future joblessness and lower incomes; social exclusion; and subsequent poor health outcomes (S4YE, 2015, p. 2). The susceptibility to poverty for unemployed youth also means that when employment is found, many of the previously unemployed youth form part of the working poor. Finally, the societal effects of unemployed youth are felt in reduced community safety and high levels of crime (S4YE, 2015, p. 3). This research focuses on the interaction between skills, training, and education, in the context of structural youth unemployment in South Africa. Therefore, a structural approach is used to analyse the efficacy of past policy of youth unemployment in South Africa.

2.2 From Neoclassical Economics to Neoliberal Policy

Neoliberalism is founded on neoclassical economic theory and the political ideology of economic liberalism (Ban, 2016, p. 19). Neoclassical economics' core tenets of individualism, instrumentalism, and equilibration serve as the foundation upon which neoliberalism has emerged. Neoliberalism's core characteristics are deregulation, privatisation, decentralisation, and integration into the global market. The individualist agenda is present in neoliberal policy, which prioritises privatisation and the private accumulation of wealth (Poku & Whitman, 2018, p. 2). The emphasis on individual freedom is further present in neoliberalism's advocacy for deregulation and the creation of global economies to aid the accumulation of wealth (ibid, p. 7). Instrumentalism is evident in neoliberal policies through the focus on mathematical models, trusted to find efficient allocations better than the state and therefore justifying deregulation. Equilibration is assumed in much of neoliberal ideology, as shown in an over-reliance on market-clearing mechanisms and the retreat of the state (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2014: Poku & Whitman, 2018). This is further shown in neoliberal policies trust in the price mechanism, theorised in neoclassical economics (Harvey, 2005). Therefore, the core characteristics of neoliberalism are founded upon neoclassical economic theory.

Despite the origins of neoliberalism, neoliberalism is not a direct translation of neoclassical theory into policy. Fine & Saad-Filho (2017) caution against viewing neoliberalism as a "cogent ideology" due to its varied and ever-changing application (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017, p. 7). This malleability is evident in neoliberalism's concession that the State does indeed have a central role to play in providing certain services, but this state intervention is only justified so long as it serves the creation and maintenance of the market economy (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2014, p. 156). Poku & Whitman echo this characterisation, insisting that although neoliberalism is not monolithic, programmes and policies pursued within the neoliberal project reflect a common idea of what the economy is and should be. This common vision is "a philosophical and political determination to give primacy to free markets over state-led regulatory regime…" (Poku & Whitman, 2018, p. 1). Neoliberalism is thus a political project with vested interests, values, and a guiding ideology, as opposed to a strict interpretation of neoclassical theory.

Although neoliberalism is not a cogent ideology, neoliberal policy is geared towards promoting economic liberalism. While approaches may differ, neoliberal policies prioritise deregulation, privatisation, decentralisation, and globalisation against the backdrop of increased financialisation. Deregulation is achieved by removing capital controls, thus facilitating the global mobility of capital; opening domestic markets; and devaluing currencies to promote competitive exports (ibid., p. 7). Privatisation is pursued in various ways including the systematic shrinking of the State by clamping down on fiscal deficits, austerity practices resulting from debt accumulation, and the resultant prioritisation of debt repayment at the expense of social services. The decapacitated State is then subject to privatisation of its state-owned entities (SOEs), while fiscal prudence is re-emphasised. Proponents of neoliberalism assert that adopting neoliberal policies leads to widespread growth, the benefits of which are spread to everyone in the economy through a trickle-down mechanism (Carmody & Owusu, 2016, p. 65). Thus, neoliberalism advocates against interventionist policies in order to allow the market to distribute benefits efficiently. The social value of neoliberalism is thus dependent on the effectiveness of this trickle-down mechanism. These priorities of neoliberal policy are emblematic of economic liberalism.

Macroeconomic stability is a fundamental element in all neoliberal policies. Macroeconomic stability represents a general state of equilibrium with minimal deficits and minimal surpluses across all aspects of the economy: fiscal, trade, output, employment, and monetary (Ames, et al 2001). This stability, or equilibrium, is a reflection of the neoclassical theory of optimal allocation of resources which is achieved through a self-regulating market. Neoliberalism prioritises fiscal and monetary balance, which will be discussed in turn. Macroeconomic stability is characterised as a precondition for economic growth (ibid). Macroeconomic stability is therefore an explicit goal of all neoliberal policies.

Fiscal balance, as a key component of macroeconomic stability, features prominently in neoliberal policy. This refers to a dogmatic approach to eliminating the fiscal deficit. This has resulted in widespread austerity measures and the demonisation of social spending (Saad-Filho, 2011, p. 251). Additionally, fiscal prudence has presented a significant barrier to governments who turn to the private sector in order to fund infrastructure development and industrialisation. The self-imposed need to reduce government spending combines with assumptions that the private sector is more efficient, and efficient and therefore paves the way for the sideling of the state and the centrality of the private sector.

Monetary policy that serves macroeconomic stability is another feature of neoliberal policy. This primarily comprises inflation-targeting and central bank independence. Saad-Filho (2018) refers to these components as forming the New Monetary Policy Consensus (NMPC) (Saad-Filho, 2018, p. 335). Inflation-targeting is therefore not an end in and of itself but is an essential tool in ensuring macroeconomic (and increasingly financial) stability. To maintain the dominance of financialisation neoliberalism requires the state to contain inflation, often through inflation-targeting mandates which raise interest rates to achieve the stated target (Poku & Whitman, p. 7, 2018). Saad-Filho (2018) explains that although the stated goal of inflation targeting is price stabilisation, its real purpose is to ensure the economy is meeting the interests of holders of financial capital (Saad-Filho, 2018, p. 343). When inflation is kept low, global financial capital is confident in their expected returns, and since financialisation is mobile, a low inflation rate may encourage longer term financial holdings. Secondly, the tool through which inflation targeting is realised is the nominal interest rate. The assumption of neoliberal policy is that inflation is mostly demand-induced, and therefore raising interest rates is the most effective way to reduce overheating in the economy. Therefore, the more emphasis is placed on inflation targeting, the more likely the central bank will utilise the interest rate mechanism. Higher interest rates accrue massive benefits to the wealthy holders of capital (and subsequently have dire effects on the poor) and therefore the primacy of inflation-targeting is to ensure the continued concentrated accumulation of wealth. Thus, monetary balance is essential to neoliberal policy, given the latter's focus on macroeconomic stability that enables wealth accumulation amidst increased financialisation.

A key component of contemporary neoliberal policy is global integration. The benefits of neoliberalism are maximised when it is implemented internationally, as this facilitates the mobility of capital and the deepening of financialisation. The increased dominance of financial markets, facilitated by capital liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation is an important dimension of neoliberalism as it agitates for integration into the global financial system. To this end, neoliberalism is an international project which must be adopted by as many countries as possible. A quintessential example of this is how conditional loans are systematically offered to states in times of crisis, imposing the adoption of various 'reforms' in order to receive financing. The loan terms are set by dominant lenders in the global financial system who impose neoliberal agendas on recipient countries with the aim of preserving the profitability of the private sector in said country (Poku & Whiteman, 2018).

Neoliberalism in Practice

Neoliberal ideas are emblemised in the operations of international institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2014, p. 155). Manifestations of neoliberalism can be seen in the policies prescribed by the Washington Consensus (WC) and the Post-Washington Consensus (PWC). The IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and its related Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facilities (ESAFs) are littered with these tools and mechanisms, and their implementation has firmly embedded neoliberal values and conditions in the Global South. As Stein (2012) notes, "neoliberalism became embedded through the conduct, habits, and repertoire of development policy practice" (Stein, 2012, p. 432). Analysing its spread in Africa, Stein discusses how national elections became a contest to determine which party would be the best "custodians of the neoliberal state," thus resulting in neoliberalism becoming a normative characteristic (ibid., p. 433). Examples provided are Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, and Ghana. The fortification of neoliberalism in Africa was done through various channels including the SAPs abovementioned, other loan conditionalities,

capacity-building training, and consulting by the World Bank in addition to the training of neoliberal African economists embedded in African universities (Stein, 2012, p. 433). The proliferation of neoliberal policy has thus been coordinated by international institutions adhering to the WC and PWC.

Further proving the previously mentioned claim that neoliberalism is not a cogent ideology, the practice of neoliberalism has evolved in order to appease contemporary concerns and prevailing social issues. Gabor (2021) characterises the current praxis of neoliberalism as "The Wall Street Consensus" (Gabor, 2021). The Wall Street Consensus refers to the increasing demands by global capital for states to derisk their economy and to allow for unrestrained financialisation (ibid, p. 1). It represents the transition of neoliberalism - the previous preoccupation with trade liberalisation is now projected onto financial liberalisation. It emphasises a developmental role for global finance and therefore encourages governments to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). The proliferation and deepening of financialisation is occurring in real time and is present in many of the current policy frameworks discussed later. The integration of financialisation into neoliberal policy represents the multifaceted pragmatic nature of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism's approach to employment is based on neoclassical labour economics. Patnaik (2019) posits that neoliberalism requires a squeeze on petty production and its aversion to inflation requires curtailing demand, both of which necessitate reductions in employment and/or wages (Patnaik, 2019). This vulnerability of workers in the labour market is a key feature of a capitalist market economy where workers are purposely kept vulnerable because their only resource (i.e. their labour power) must be sold to someone else at a price lower than the actual value of their labour in order to maximise profitability. For wages to be kept as low as possible the labour market must be competitive and the creation of a reserve army of labour will follow, which is reflected in high levels of unemployment (Hill et al., 2009, p. 109). These conditions are required in the labour market in order to adhere to the abovementioned neoclassical principles of equilibrium and market-clearing prices.

When neoliberal policy does address unemployment, it proposes policies founded on neoclassical understandings of labour economics. In tracing neoclassical economics' transition to policy questions, Boyer & Smith (2001) identified the rise of human capital theory, popularised by Becker (1962) (Boyer & Smith, 2001, p. 199). Becker's theory of human capital assigned responsibility for economic outcomes to the individual, signalling the integration of neoclassical economics with prevailing labour trends. Becker's work assigned responsibility for economic outcomes to the hyper-individualised homo economicus. This theory transformed homo economicus from an equal "partner of exchange" to a subject who is an "entrepreneur himself" (Peters, 2016, p. 298). This redefined homo economics is thus compelled to see themselves as capital and is further compelled to invest in their upskilling and education in order to receive greater returns in the form of income. The combination of hyper-individualisation and the retreat of the state in a neoliberal society elevates the concept of 'personal investment' as one ultimately tied to survival and employability (ibid., p. 301). Personal investment choices include decisions regarding education, healthcare, and retirement. The emphasis on personal or individual responsibility obscures from view any structural patterns in a given economy, preventing serious consideration of government intervention. Therefore, neoliberal policy relating to unemployment largely adopts a human capital lens and therefore prescribes individual upskilling and empowerment programmes.

2.3 Conclusion of Literature Review

Varying conceptions of unemployment have different implications for policy and the role of the State. Having reviewed this literature, this research report employs a structural unemployment analysis of South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda due to the long-term, persistent nature of unemployment in these countries relating to a skills and jobs mismatch. The focus on youth unemployment further requires structural insights due to it being a demographic factor. Due to neoclassical economics' position as the underlying theory upon which neoliberalism is based, an explanation of neoclassical unemployment and its broader theory was required to understand particular outlooks and policy agendas.

With the rise of neoliberalism in sub-Saharan Africa, neoliberal policies informed by neoclassical economics warrant attention. South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda have all implemented neoliberal policies aimed at addressing their respective levels of structural youth unemployment, thus it is pertinent to analyse the effect of neoliberal policies on this crisis. However, to understand the effectiveness of neoliberalism in creating employment, these policies and programmes must be analysed in relation to curtailed demand, the suppression of wages, the creation of a reserve army of labour, the push for self-employment, and the broader impositions of global capital. Thereafter, this research dissertation discusses why the national policies founded on neoliberal ideas will be unable to address these structural problems, despite their international proliferation.

3 Research Methodology and Data

3.1 Comparative Case Study

This paper uses the research design of a comparative case study to organise the findings of the research. This methodology is chosen due to its versatility – allowing this dissertation to deliver on its objectives. The value of case-study approaches to social science research is emphasised by Byrne & Ragin (2009) as "case studies of different kinds, and in particular, multiple case studies founded on systematic comparison – are the foundations of useful theoretical descriptions of the social world" (Byrne & Ragin, 2009, p. 5). The use of a case study approach here is intended to, as suggested by Byrne & Ragin (2009), provide important generalisable ideas regarding structural youth unemployment in South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda. The generalisations that emerge are not intended to be universal but are useful in identifying key constraints to solving the youth unemployment challenge in these particular regions. It also enables the researcher to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data while providing a particularly useful format for studying social policy (Tight, 2017, p. 9).

Priya (2021) characterises the case study as a research strategy with the following elements: it requires a close analysis of issues that are fully contextualised, it enables the researcher to adopt a variety of data techniques, and it provides the researcher with flexibility when choosing the "unit of analysis" (Priya, 2021, p. 95). The units of analysis here are South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda – three countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This dissertation looks at unemployment trends in each country, identifies determinants and drivers of youth unemployment in each country, and thereafter analyses the effectiveness of neoliberal policies in addressing youth unemployment. This study adopts an explanatory approach, explaining how structural youth unemployment manifests in the three countries and then analysing the effects of neoliberal

policies on this issue. By conducting a cross-country case study, some generalisations regarding neoliberalism and its application in sub-Saharan Africa can be drawn.

The emergence and entrenchment of neoliberalism and neoliberal policymaking has a particular pattern, illustrated well in the three countries being compared in this study. The choice to compare South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda arises from these countries shared concerns with high structural youth unemployment and the attempts to address this through neoliberal policy. Structural unemployment as a problem in South Africa is documented by De Lannoy et al. (2018) where the researchers identified key factors that drive unemployment in the country. Among the key factors are the relationship between economic growth and jobs, characteristics of the post-apartheid labour supply, and demand for skills (De Lannoy et al., 2018, p. 20). The authors assert the critical importance of macro-level interventions in coping with the consequences of structural unemployment – such as creating employment opportunities for low-skilled youth (De Lannoy et al., 2018, p. 28). The National Development Plan clearly outlines inequality, skewed ownership, and related labour market outcomes as some of the main structural challenges, thus proposing various employment interventions (National Planning Commission, 2012, pp. 114-115).

Although now dated, Simkins & Clarke (1978) posited that South Africa's unemployment rate would be difficult to bring down unless the country maintains high levels of growth (Simkins & Clarke, 1978, p. 42). This outcome was reached by discussing the "underutilisation" of labour in the South African economy. Drawing pivotal conclusions, Simkins & Clarke describe the Southern African labour market in the 1970s as one characterised by high (and increasing) levels of unskilled workers, less movement of currently employed workers, low job growth, low levels of investment, and a marked dominance of capital-intensive industries (ibid, p. 77). These diagnoses point to the structural issues of occupation/education, region, and industry respectively. Educational outcomes are particularly relevant in South Africa because of the apartheid regime's long-term education policy that systematically restricted the development of education infrastructure in the country, save for the white-only schooling system. The stunting of infrastructure is something the democratic regime has dedicated resources to addressing, especially in primary and secondary education. The focus on youth and skills attainment makes the countries of Ghana and Uganda particularly relevant. Ghana's struggle with jobless growth has greatly affected its young population, with youth extensively involved in self-employment in its mineral-exporting economy (Coulibaly & Page, 2021, p. 3). Uganda is also struggling with the low creation of "productive jobs," which has a specific effect on youth. Vulnerable, low-paid employment is widespread in the country (ibid., p. 6).

In order to provide a fair account of policy orientation, this research paper will identify the neoliberal elements of policies by looking for the key characteristics of neoliberalism in said policies. As discussed in Section 2.2, neoliberalism's core tenets are deregulation, privatisation, decentralisation, and integration into the global market, with the added layer of financial integration. Deregulation policies will focus on enhancing free market policies that allow greater freedom for businesses and the private sector, including a deregulated labour market. The deregulation of trade is also central to neoliberalism, integrating free market ideas with the aim of global integration. The privatisation agenda in neoliberalism can be identified through policies proposing the privatisation of state-owned entities, promoting public-private partnerships, and a general disapproval of state provision of social services (ie: the retreat of the state). The decentralisation inherent in neoliberalism is diffuse, with privatisation and state retreat serving as key examples. Integration into the global system is also diffuse, as opposed

to a targeted policy. As mentioned above, this can be seen through increased trade liberalisation, prioritising access to global financial markets, emphasising the importance of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), and increasing links to international financial institutions through loans and partnerships. Trade liberalisation in this context refers to a focus on export-led growth, with overseas markets being prioritised. The financial character of neoliberalism is evident in projects such as micro-lending, increased international finance, and promoting financial integration through banking systems. Underpinning all neoliberal policies is the fundamental goal of macroeconomic stability, with inflation targeting and austerity measures serving the basis. Although neoliberalism's dynamic nature has been recognised, these are the core tenets of the ideology. Therefore, policies that contain these elements and motivations can be identified as having a neoliberal basis.

Neoliberal approaches to unemployment specifically will propose a lesser role for the state in employment creation and instead suggest entrepreneurship, self-employment, and private job creation. This is in line with the theory of human capital (Becker, 1962) approach mentioned above. Additionally, neoliberal policies may propose greater labour market flexibility which may include less unemployment benefits and more precarious contracting. As Patnaik (2019) asserted, elites under neoliberalism itself may benefit from unemployment as this enables wage suppression. Therefore, a neoliberal approach to unemployment will focus on individual efforts and less on state-led employment initiatives.

This paper posits that all three countries studied have attempted, in different ways, to address their unemployment crisis using neoliberal policies. This allows for a useful comparison which will enable an analysis of neoliberalism's effectiveness in addressing high structural youth unemployment. Further reviews of the unemployment trends and policy trajectory of each country is contained in Section 4, where detailed country profiles are drawn up.

3.2 Data

The inquiry of this paper begins with the assumption that youth unemployment in South Africa is known to be alarmingly high. This is admitted by the government (eNCA, 2019; Ramaphosa, 2022; Statistics South Africa, 2022) with incumbent President Ramaphosa stating, "The fact that millions of young people are not in employment, education or training is the greatest challenge facing our country today" (Ramaphosa, 2022). The two main opposition political parties also frame youth unemployment as a key electoral talking point (SABC News, 2019; Democratic Alliance, 2023). Multilateral organisations and international networks have also expressed immense concern with South Africa's high level of youth unemployment (OECD, 2015; African Development Bank, 2016, pp. 121-139; Duval, Ji, & Shibata, 2021, p. 26). South Africa's high rate of youth unemployment is one of, and by some calculations the highest in the world (Naidoo, 2021; Neufeld, 2023). This characterisation of South Africa's youth unemployment rate as being at catastrophic levels is supported by the country's official statistics, with Statistics South Africa repeatedly referring to the youth's vulnerability in the labour market (Statistics South Africa, 2022; Statistics South Africa, 2023; Statistics South Africa, 2021; Statistics South Africa, 2015, p. xiv; Statistics South Africa, 2018). This paper does not intend to replicate those calculations but instead seeks to use the existing data to supplement a qualitative analysis. To this end, this research will utilise the qualitative case study methodology and will largely focus on reviewing relevant literature, policy, and quantitative indicators where this may be useful.

This approach is made possible by using a mix of data sources including official government policies, official survey reports from statistical entities, quantitative survey data from the International Labour Organization and academic analysis. The research is founded upon the initial collection of core theoretical literature on employment and unemployment, having studied structural unemployment in more depth. Insights into skills, training, and education will be presented in order to better understand the dynamics of structural youth unemployment. The policy frameworks, programmes, and interventions each country has adopted to address its structural youth unemployment will be studied and analysed, with the neoliberal influences identified. Thereafter, programme reviews, subsequent policies, and academic commentary on the implementation of these policies will provide the basis to analyse the effectiveness of neoliberal policies in addressing structural youth unemployment in the three countries.

Using the data collected from the abovementioned sources, country profiles will be created for each of the three countries. A country profile will include the following elements: a review of the country's unemployment trends; the extent of youth unemployment and its relation to skills, training, and education; the policy frameworks and policies implemented to address youth unemployment; the neoliberal elements found in the policies; and the effect of the policies. Menz (2017) explains that predominantly "policy choices for economic reform are made based on ideological and ideational preference alone and constitute a leap into the dark. It is thus important to appreciate that the particular regulation of any model's components, be they concerning finance, the labour market, or any other element, is informed by the normative and ideational glue that connects these building blocks," (Menz, 2017, p. 2). In contrast, Menz emphasises the importance of comparative policy analysis by claiming that "policy actors can draw on and learn from the experience of other countries" (ibid.). This insight serves as a key justification for the research method used in this paper. This approach allows the analysis of policies and frameworks, informed by ideology, to be assessed on the strength of their contextual application in each country.

An additional justification for this method is ethical considerations. By utilising secondary data, made available through official government survey reports, publicly available data from the ILO, academic research pertaining to each country and statistical reports from each country, the ethical risk of this research paper is minimised. Valuable secondary quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to youth unemployment is used, while official policy documents, policy briefs and academic research inform the policy content.

3.3 Limitations

A possible limitation of this policy-focused, qualitative methodology is the lack of extensive quantitative testing. Various econometric models do exist for unemployment analysis, but the usage of such models is beyond the scope of this paper. A related problem is the need to use calculated unemployment rates for the analysis. This poses a difficulty as there may be differences in methods of calculations, definitions of unemployment, reporting measures, and discrepancies in defining youth. However, this research report focuses more on how and why neoliberalism has been applied in these countries and is less concerned with the unemployment rates relative to each other. While country policy documents are often readily available, discrepancies in terms of available policy data and transparency of policy reporting between countries may result in a lack of uniformity or information on policies. This research will

attempt to overcome these problems by using standardised data compiled or estimated by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Additionally, the case study methodology can be susceptible to validity issues because there are "chances that spurious, unmeasured or unaccounted factors, and not the proposed or expected causes, might actually account for the result" (Priya, 2021, p. 101). To deal with this, this research paper will try to contextualise the cases to identify "all possible unmeasured factors" and how they can affect the analysis (ibid.). Further, the complexity of replicating a case study approach makes the findings of one case study exercise difficult to generalise. This research paper tries to generalise on a narrow set of studied variables, constrained by the limits of the three countries studied. The findings of this study cannot be used to build a universal theory, and therefore that is not an objective in this dissertation. Instead, the findings here will provide explanations regarding the effectiveness of particular policies and the political forces which have shaped their adoption in three specific countries with shared characteristics.

While neoliberalism does embody particular characteristics, it may be difficult to isolate elements of a policy and attribute them to neoliberalism in particular, due to the fluidity of neoliberal ideas. This implies that a particular policy proposal may be aimed at serving the interests of capital, but not necessarily neoliberal in nature.

Lastly, a possible limitation is that the policy frameworks upon which this research report compares may not have been fully implemented by the respective countries. Policy frameworks represent a broad orientation of a government's priorities and strategies but are not always implemented as stated. However, the assumption of this research report is that these official frameworks provide a reliable account of the issuing government's mindset and outlook, and that specific policies are derived from the principles outlined in the framework. The frameworks often explicitly explain or contextualise policy choices and are valuable in understanding a government's underlying assumptions.

3.4 Period of Analysis

To understand the structural dynamics of unemployment, the analysis will be conducted based on data reflecting economic conditions before the Covid-19 pandemic. This is to exclude any distortions such a global shock may have caused, in order to present an analysis that is relevant to the economy's normal condition. Additionally, there is a lack of available data on all the conditions this paper wants to explore from the pandemic years until 2023. The comparative approach will enable the identification of differences and similarities in the conditions of each country in addition to their respective implementations of unemployment policy. Due to this research report's orientation toward explaining South Africa's youth unemployment trends, the departure point is 1994. This represents South Africa's transition to democracy; thus, subsequent development goals are linked to promoting the wellbeing and welfare of all citizens. Given these considerations, the trends and policy analyses for all countries in this study are therefore reviewed for the period 1994-2018. Despite the end point being 2018 this does not unduly compromise the findings of the study as the issues investigated are long-term in nature.

4 Country Profiles

4.1 Country Profile: South Africa

4.1.1 Review of South Africa's Unemployment Trends

Democratic South Africa inherited a dysfunctional economy with a concerningly high unemployment rate and a youth unemployment rate higher than the national average. However, since the democratic transition, the South African government has been unable to ameliorate the unemployment situation and has seen a sustained increase in the national and youth unemployment rates. In 2008, the youth unemployment rate was twice the national average (Statistics South Africa, 2009). To date, the youth unemployment rate remains higher than the national rate. As shown in Figure 1, from 1994 to 2009 the narrow unemployment rate remained relatively stable albeit at a high rate. Although, Bannerjee et al. (2008) found significant changes in the expanded unemployment rate which was 28.2% in 1995 and had risen to 41.1% by 2005 (Bannerjee et al., 2008, p. 716). During this time, the country's GDP growth was more erratic. The first twelve years under the democratic regime saw moderate but fluctuating growth rates, peaking in 2006. Since then, the growth rate trend has trended negatively. The combination of growth and rising unemployment is referred to as 'jobless growth' or growth without jobs. It contradicts the assumption that economic growth always precipitates employment creation.

The rise in unemployment in 2010 sets the unemployment rate on a higher path. By then, the government was increasingly concerned with unemployment and its expressions in South Africa: the racial dynamic, the youth dynamic, and the gender dynamic (Statistics South Africa, 2009, p. 43). Reflecting on 20 years of democracy, the Labour Market Dynamics Report identified that South Africa's triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment needed a concerted effort to create jobs and growth (Statistics South Africa, 2014). This report also found that South Africa had the highest unemployment rate among emerging economies in 2012. The country attributed some of its unemployment problems to the toll of the global financial crisis (GFC) (ibid., p. i). At the time, the group with the lowest unemployment rate was those aged above 45 years old (ibid., p. 41). Between 2008-2013, the number of discouraged work-seekers increased, and more women than men were discouraged (ibid., pp. 44-45).

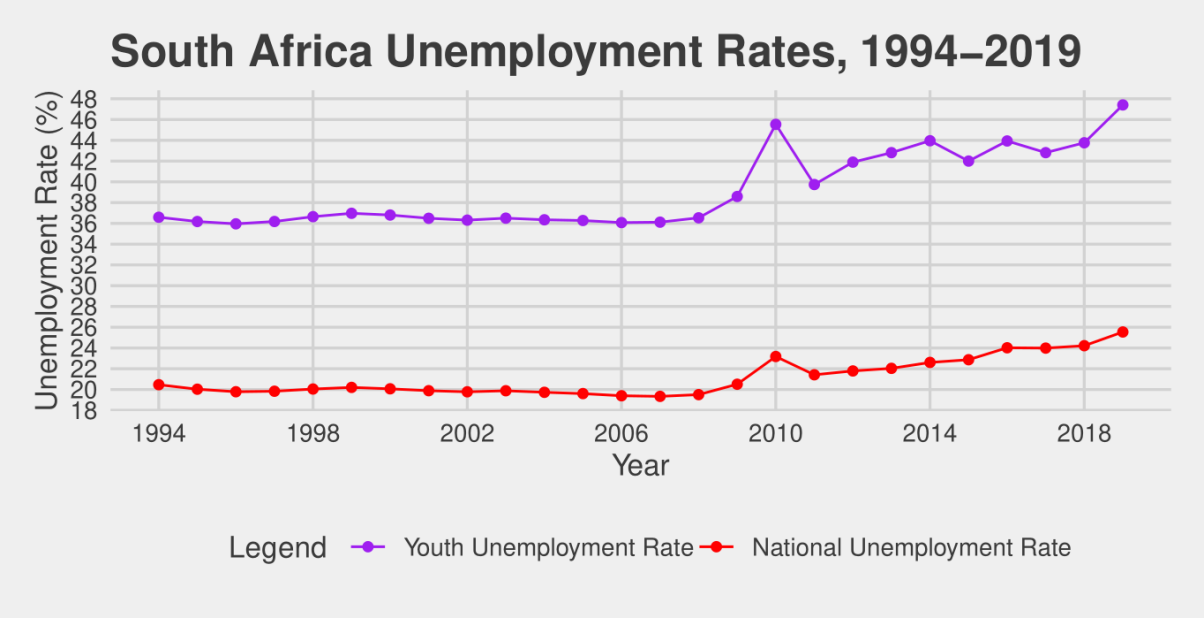
By 2018, the unemployment rate reached a record high, and the youth unemployment rate was more than double the national average (Statistics South Africa, 2018, p. vii). The difficulty of transitioning into employment was still disproportionately felt by youth, largely linked to a lack of work experience (ibid., p. 6). Between 2013-2018, unemployment rate increased for all ages in South Africa, but the youth faced the largest increase (ibid., p. 27). The Department of Labour identified the unemployment problem as owing to the "oversupply of unskilled labour and an undersupply of qualified and skilled labour" (Department of Labour, 2018, p. 3). Additional complexities were that youth who had completed high school were struggling to find employment and the country's "developed provinces" were unable to create sufficient jobs (ibid., p. 13).

Unemployment in South Africa disproportionately affects the youth, Black South Africans, and women. Young people's vulnerability manifests in various ways but is emblemised in the youth

unemployment rate being persistently double the average unemployment rate (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 101). Although educational attainment is generally considered the path to formal employment and thus to upward mobility, the returns to education are not straightforward in South Africa. Unemployment rates are lowest for those with tertiary education and those with no education. There are significantly worse employment outcomes for those whose maximum education is either primary or secondary. These dynamics were attributed to a labour market preference for workers with very high levels of technical skills obtained at a university; and a preference for older workers who had clear experience and industry knowledge. Mlatsheni & Rospabé (2002) showed that a strong positive effect of tertiary education was stronger for white youth than for black youth, suggesting that this was due to white youth's possession of "employment-enhancing features," which are higher levels of education and better quality education, coming from a family that has higher levels of employment, and being located in areas of low unemployment (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002, p. 17). If young people do secure employment, they are more likely to have fewer employment-related benefits than other adults including medical aid, and they are more likely to be employed on a limited-duration contract than other adults. The youth also make up a greater proportion of the long-term unemployed than any other age group. The chances of young people finding employment are increased when they possess prior work experience, but there are insufficient opportunities available. These factors and obstacles coalesce to create a discouraged youth workforce and are contributors to the worrying levels of NEET youth.

South Africa's labour statistics consistently reflect the racial and gender inequalities in the economy. Women have a higher incidence of long-term unemployment than men and were more likely to be Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) than men (Statistics South Africa, 2018, p. 83 & 96). In terms of race, black South Africans were over-represented among the unemployed and under-represented among the employed. This contrasts with white South Africans, who comprised 10.1% of the working-age population in 2008 but were over-represented among the employed and under-represented among the unemployed. Mlatsheni & Rospabé (2002) found that gender discrepancies were linked to hiring discrimination with young women having higher unemployment rates than young men. These trends have continued, as reported in the 2015-2020 Labour Market Dynamics Report, which found that black South African youth had the highest NEET rate at 33.6%; that white South Africans earned more than triple what black South Africans earned; and that black people had the highest incidence of long-term unemployment (Statistics South Africa, 2020, p. 28). The structural barriers to quality education for Black South Africans are evident when comparing the employment rate of Black graduates with White graduates. In 2008, Black graduates had an unemployment rate of 12.6%, more than six times the 1.9% unemployment rate of white graduates, and higher than the national average unemployment rate of graduates of 7.7% (ibid., p. 3.14). The high rates of unemployment and youth unemployment have been attributed to structural factors present in the South African economy as opposed to cyclical factors, predominantly centred around a mismatch between skills and available jobs (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

Figure 1



Source: ILO Modelled Estimates (ILOEST) Bulk Download Facility

4.1.2 South Africa Policy Trajectory and Analysis

RDP (1994 – 1996)

South Africa's democratic transition was welcoming to a state-led policy framework which understood the need to mobilise the public sector to meet development objectives. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was emblematic of this character but was only implemented from 1994 to 1996. The RDP called for collective state-building, identified the need for labour protection and put state-led infrastructure development at the centre of its policy (Republic of South Africa, 1994, pp. 9-10). The framework committed to financing development through the RDP Fund, but spending was radically curtailed due to the fiscal and monetary discipline required for achieving neoliberal 'macroeconomic stability'. However, the RDP text itself criticised the then widespread Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) imposed by the IMF and World Bank for their "adverse effects on employment and standards of living," (Republic of South Africa, 1994, p. 10). The RDP sought the eradication of the effects of apartheid and committed to realising this through the strengthening of democratic institutions, increasing democratic participation, and prioritising "sustainable and environmentally friendly growth and development" (ibid., p. 7). The framework identified that apartheid engineered and maintained the poverty of black South Africans and acknowledged that women and youth were particularly vulnerable to poor living conditions. Therefore, the framework strived to achieve the twin goals of freedom and improved standards of living for all South Africans. It proposed 'equitable growth' as the ideal mechanism to achieve these (ibid., p. 7).

Equitable growth would be achieved through substantial public investments linked to realising basic needs. The RDP would integrate "growth, development, reconstruction, redistribution and reconciliation" and explicitly link these concepts to nation-building through sustained infrastructure programmes that delivered basic services to all South Africans (ibid., p. 8). The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) was a key initiative which sought to link

employment opportunities to the construction of necessary infrastructure. Thus, the framework prioritised government spending for investment as opposed to consumption. It raised concerns with capital outflows, undertook to review development assistance terms, and welcomed FDI that aligned with the stated objectives of the RDP. After identifying key areas where capital was required, government would lead investment efforts and thereby encourage additional private sector investment into those areas. It preferred a regional integration strategy and sought to establish patterns of ownership that were more proportional to the country's demographics. The RDP promised to avoid increasing general taxation and created the Davis Tax Commission to consider which tax policies would enable achievement of the RDP's goals. A newly formed National Economic, Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) would serve as a forum whereby government, labour, and business could jointly address issues hindering the achievement of the RDP (ibid., p. 27).

The RDP defined a wide-range of basic needs and committed to meeting these needs for all South Africans. Explicitly mentioned needs included job creation, land, health care, energy supplies, and social welfare (ibid., p. 9). In rectifying the injustices of apartheid, the RDP obliged to restructure the education system of the country and sought to ensure full democratic participation through "knowledge, creativity, and skill" (ibid.). South Africa's wealth inequality and income inequality were overtly criticised in the RDP, and the framework sought to remove the burdens of unemployment and poverty from the poor majority. The RDP entrenched worker's rights and collective bargaining mechanisms in order to protect workers from exploitation (ibid, p. 10).

The RDP assigned government the responsibility of economic restructuring and unambiguously prioritised employment creation in its economic framework (ibid). It sought to increase the economy's ability to absorb labour into formal and informal work and developed the National Public Works Programme as one way of facilitating labour-intensive economic activities. The Ministry of Trade and Industry adopted, as a key target, the creation of jobs and the reorientation of the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) towards labour-intensive projects (ibid, p. 77). The RDP positioned gender equality as an economic objective and proposed various measures to address gender discrimination including subsidies, public provision of childcare and training programmes for women. The establishment of Presidential Projects would also allow for institutional and financial support in special areas of development including the empowerment of youth, women, and people with disabilities (ibid, p. 40). The RDP's "fundamental goal" was to establish an "employment-creating, labour-absorbing economy which will ultimately lead to full employment," (ibid, p. 22).

Neoliberal influence is reflected in parts of the RDP as found in the proposed outward-oriented trade policy and manufacturing for export. However, the RDP positions the state as the central leader of economic transformation. It assigns the private sector a sizable implementation role but is grounded in the state's obligations to South Africans. By embedding democratic participation into the framework, South Africans themselves are also called on to implement the RDP (ibid, p. 20). The RDP is a demand-side economic framework that assumed infrastructure development and industrialisation will increase demand for goods and services and therefore stimulate the economy (ibid, p. 9). Internal contradictions are present in the framework, due to the tension between interventionism and neoliberalism. The RDP is a state-led macroeconomic framework which accommodates neoliberal fundamentals in a piece-meal manner.

GEAR (1996-2001)

The Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme represents the embedding of neoliberalism in South Africa's macroeconomic framework. Following the RDP, GEAR is considered South Africa's self-imposed structural adjustment programme as it bears striking resemblance to the World Bank policies calling for fiscal prudence, inflation targeting, private sector-led growth and privatisation of publicly owned entities (Kahn, 2000, p. 4). GEAR criticised the then-prevailing average annual growth rate of 3% per annum, citing it as too low to address the unemployment crisis, too low to achieve equitable redistribution, and too low to generate sufficient revenue for government spending (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 1). These considerations, combined with fear over the South African exchange rate, precipitated a shift in the economic framework.

GEAR proposed transforming South Africa into a competitive and outward-oriented economy that would attain 6% growth per annum and create 400 000 jobs annually, by 2000 (ibid, p. 2). GEAR's core tenets included budget reform, faster reduction of the fiscal deficit, relaxing exchange controls and using the exchange rate to improve competitiveness, containing inflation, reducing import tariffs, using tax incentives to encourage private investment, and implementing expansionary infrastructure programmes (ibid, p. 2). The framework is intensely concerned with maintaining low levels of inflation and increasing investor confidence. It is also preoccupied with eliminating government dissaving and therefore aims to reduce the fiscal deficit relative-to GDP target (ibid, p. 8). Budgetary reform was to commence through reprioritisation and review of spending programmes on basic needs, resulting in the termination of some publicly provided services and encouraging the private provision of (ibid, p. 10). It cautioned against fiscal expansion, citing the possibility of entrenching cyclical patterns, and equating fiscal expansion with an inevitable balance of payments crisis (ibid, p. 3). It promoted widescale macroeconomic discipline and justified this by misleadingly claiming that it would allow for government spending to be more redistributive.

GEAR's industrial policy approach shifted the country to focusing on supply-side policies (ibid, p. 12) and added an additional layer of neoliberal logic to the policy landscape. The framework reprioritised capital investment toward meeting global market demands and intensified the quest for global competitiveness. It made clear government's anxieties through the consistent claim that "brisk", "accelerated", and "urgent" macroeconomic reforms were necessary. These reforms were increasing and diversifying exports, expanding private and public capital investment, and recommitting to labour-intensity. Although GEAR lamented the economy's struggle with short-term capital inflows, it does not entertain the possibility of capital controls. GEAR called on government to enable a surge of private capital and promised that the IDC would invest in smaller enterprises. It also introduced industrial support measures that subsidised industrialisation in competitive sectors, proposed the removal of various regulations, and called on wage moderation to aid competitiveness (ibid). The framework renewed the state's commitment to infrastructure investment but balanced this with the supposed need for frugality. To overcome this, it proposed the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPPs). Furthermore, it vowed to maximise investor confidence including through the use of exchange rate mechanisms and tax incentives that would encourage private investment (ibid, p. 21). The supply-side focus of GEAR was necessitated by its goal of export-orientation and trade liberalisation. This positions GEAR as an archetype of neoliberal macroeconomic frameworks.

GEAR's employment policy was upheld by neoliberal assumptions and requirements. Although educational attainment and upskilling was viewed as essential to creating a more productive labour force, GEAR lamented the proportion of GDP being spent on education (then 7%). To remedy this, it called for greater private sector involvement in higher education under the guise that this would free up funding to bolster basic education. In prioritising competitiveness, the framework proposed several revisions to labour policy. It advocated for wage moderation and labour flexibility, stoking fears of a wage-price spiral which would be detrimental to the inflation rate (ibid, p. 5). Despite the presence of youth unemployment, it explicitly called for "reduced minimum wage schedules for young trainees" (ibid, p. 5). GEAR's two key labour market reforms were to ensure greater labour force flexibility and to promote the upskilling of workers in the pursuit of higher productivity (ibid, p. 18). The former would ensure job creation and the latter would allow government to distribute labour benefits to more South Africans. The outward-orientation of the economy required greater labour productivity in order to be globally competitive. Therefore, the employment policy needed to balance the need for "dynamic efficiency, skill enhancement and the expansion of reasonably remunerated employment" with the need for labour-intensive job creation for low-skilled and/or inexperienced workers (ibid, p. 19). Macroeconomic stability and the conditions required to ensure macroeconomic stability, were thus prioritised in order to realise the success of GEAR as a neoliberal, export-led strategy (ibid, p. 22). Although subsequent policy frameworks have proposed different programmes, the underlying logic of GEAR has been maintained. This is particularly evident with regards to how the government conceives of and addresses growth and unemployment. The neoliberal character of GEAR is thus embedded in South Africa's macroeconomic policy trajectory thereafter.

Government claimed that GEAR was essential in order to achieve the goals of the RDP, but the strategies are diametrically opposed in important ways. The focus of GEAR on supply-side constraints was a marked departure from the RDP, but the revised role of the state is the starkest difference. Despite South Africa's extreme vulnerability to speculative investment and volatility in the global financial market, capital controls were removed by GEAR (Cheru, 2001, p. 524). Further, with GEAR marking the official shift toward neoliberal macroeconomic policymaking, Peet (2002) pointed out that the need for economic restructuring was abandoned. Additionally, commitments to nationalise key sectors fell away to appease the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), various business groups, local media and the international audience of the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the IMF (Peet, 2002, p. 71). The neoliberal fundamentals of "cutting state deficits, controlling inflation, imposing wage restraint, adopting outward orientation, and most importantly, recognizing the superiority of market forces over state regulatory interventions," directed South Africa's macroeconomic framework (ibid, p. 73).

ASGISA (2006-2010)

The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) was packaged as a macroeconomic framework but was focused on microeconomic reform while leaving the neoliberal macroeconomy introduced in GEAR largely untouched (Isaacs, 2014, p. 51). The key constraints ASGISA sought to address were currency volatility, infrastructure backlogs, the shortage of skilled labour, administrative barriers facing SMEs, the highly concentrated ownership of production, and institutional inefficiencies (Republic of South Africa, 2006, pp. 4-5). ASGISA noted that previous growth was owed to "strong commodity prices, strong capital inflows and strong domestic consumer demand" but was concerned that these factors strengthened the rand and therefore hindered export-orientation and global competitiveness

(ibid, p. 4). It sought to outdo the economic growth rate of 5% under GEAR. An additional concern was that a third of South Africans were not in the "mainstream economy" (ibid). The framework reiterated the role of state-led infrastructure projects, sought to introduce multiple educational programmes linked to improving employability, and targeted the elimination of the "second economy," (Republic of South Africa, 1996, pp. 6-11).

The dual economy thesis refers to a conceptualisation of the South African economy as having a divide between "two economies" – the first being a "modern, smart, and progressive" economy and the second being a "poor, undeveloped, and under-developed" economy (Terreblanche, 2005). This expression frames South Africa as possessing these characteristics simultaneously, therefore showing the coexistence of an advanced economy in the formal economy and underdeveloped sectors with high levels of informality (Cheru, 2001, p. 505). The eradication of the second economy in ASGISA refers to processes of formalisation, due to the chasm in incomes and standards of living between the two economies. ASGISA emphasised that achieving its employment goals would require "effective partnerships" between government, labour, and business. EPWP exemplified the relationship between government and labour, and the PPP model exemplified the relationship between government and business. What was undefined in ASGISA was the mechanism through which labour and business would cooperate. The framework promoted deregulation to encourage business activity and sought to reduce the tax burden (ibid, p. 5). To combat the skewness of productive ownership and concentration, ASGISA elevated the importance of competition regulation. However, it did not refer to any redistributive mechanisms or processes. The framework posited that government would develop and promote sectoral strategies to attract strategic private investments. Where more co-ordination was required, PPPs would be strengthened to achieve industrial goals (ibid, p. 8).

In contrast to GEAR, ASGISA showed an interest in youth outcomes as evidenced by the establishment of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and the National Youth Policy (NYP). NYDA was formed to "facilitate economic participation…and achievement of education and training," for the youth (National Youth Development Agency Act 54 of 2008). The agency was tasked with providing career guidance, maintaining a database of employment opportunities, and assisting youth in the school to work transition. It was also empowered to provide financial assistance for career-related projects and entrepreneurial pursuits (Republic of South Africa, 2008). The NYP recommended interventions required to achieve youth development through reducing poverty, unemployment, and underemployment. It identified employment as central to the reduction of poverty and prioritised government-led interventions that were supported by the private sector. The NYP urged government to capitalise on the demographic dividend and proposed concerted efforts be made toward improving the quality of and completion of basic education. The policy emphasised the improvements needed in the school-to-work transition and demarcated the importance of offering out-of-school youth postschool training and support. It proposed that government support youth entrepreneurship and play a leading role in establishing learnerships and apprenticeships. It also called on government to encourage youth participation in the informal economy (National Youth Commission & Youth Desk in The Presidency, 2009).

ASGISA did not refer to macroeconomic policies explicitly and instead reified the existing export-oriented, market-led, macroeconomic stability framework set by GEAR. ASGISA confined itself to addressing microeconomic reforms and methods to correct market distortions. Although it maintains state-led infrastructure development, its assumptions are neoliberal in

nature – prioritising outward orientation with the eventual realisation of equity and welfare. Therefore, ASGISA was a microeconomic framework that sought to improve conditions to allow for the implementation of the existing neoliberal macroeconomic framework.

NGP (2010 – 2020)

The NGP was a self-proclaimed departure from the previous macroeconomic frameworks, but its progressive economic ideas were undermined by its neoliberal core. The NGP committed to a looser monetary policy that still prioritised inflation targeting while supporting a competitive exchange rate. Therefore, the NGP introduced a willingness to lower real interest rates in order to spur investment (ibid, p. 16). The framework looked to operationalise the exchange rate as a mechanism for economic growth. However, targeting inflation remained a priority and therefore the NGP imposed tighter fiscal constraints. The NGP identified the mobilisation of resources for human resources and infrastructure development as a key macroeconomic goal. Employment creation was the central priority of the NGP and was linked to concerns around inequality and poverty (ibid, p. 2). The targets of the NGP were centred around jobs, growth, equity, and the environment with each outcome linked to the labour force. Despite this renewed commitment, the policy stated that it would maximise the creation of decent work opportunities *subject to* its "limited capital and capacity," (ibid, p. 6). Although not explicitly mentioned, this was a restating of government's desire for tight-fistedness. Thus, it retained macroeconomic stability as the fundamental logic of monetary and fiscal policy.

The NGP framed a developmental, active role for the state as a short-term necessity. Labour force concerns were central to the NGP, which cited labour absorption through the restructuring of the South African economy as an underlying goal (ibid, p. 1). To this end, various industrial policies were championed and the need for skills development was re-emphasised. The NGP was compelled to propose more direct and interventionist solutions to rectify the employment crisis. Namely, the state would fund direct employment projects, disburse targeted subsidies, and consider an expansionary macroeconomic outlook (ibid, p. 7) The active role of the state in employment creation was to be phased out slowly, as medium-term goals aimed to induce private investment into labour-absorbing sectors and positioned the state as the provider of enabling infrastructure and regulatory frameworks. In the long-term, the framework called on the state to maintain knowledge- and capital-intensive sectors. The NGP acknowledged the need for South Africa to "reindustrialise" – likely to counter to the deindustrialisation that resulted from GEAR and ASGISA – but its proposed mechanisms lacked coherence. Development finance institutions (DFIs) were tasked with greater investment into employment-creating industrialisation, but deregulation and increasing global competitiveness remained firm objectives of the policy (ibid, p. 17). Therefore, the active role of the state was confined to the immediate goals and was considered as a means to create the necessary conditions for neoliberal policies to thrive.

Despite the NGP's fair diagnosis of the employment problems, its prescribed policies are limited to neoliberal solutions. The NGP acknowledged that the worrying youth unemployment trends were directly related to the economy's inability to create sufficient jobs (ibid, p. 3). The framework thus committed to the ILO's decent work agenda – aiming to create "more and better jobs" (ibid). In addition to the infrastructure development and labour absorption measures mentioned above, the policy promoted various educational reforms and specifically sought to improve Further Education and Training (FET) initiatives.

The NGP's concerns with youth unemployment were to be addressed by multiple stakeholders. To this end, National Treasury released a Youth Unemployment Policy discussion document in 2011 to propose policy options. The discussion document claimed that employers viewed "unskilled, inexperienced jobseekers as risky… [and therefore] considered entry-level wages to be too high relative to the risk," (National Treasury, 2011, p. 5). To address these and other identified constraints, the discussion document proposed that government review the legislative environment, probe the feasibility of public employment for youth, trial various employment subsidies, strengthen skills development initiatives, and develop stronger job placement processes (ibid, p. 6). Due to the NGP's vague commitments to improving employment outcomes, discussion documents such as the above guided policy implementation and watered down the stronger interventionist proposals of the NGP.

Under the NGP, government adopted a Youth Employment Accord, representing a coordinated response to the high levels of youth unemployment. The accord was a national commitment by government and its "social partners" (business, labour, and community organisations) to address youth unemployment through various mechanisms, outlined in a youth employment strategy (Department of Economic Development, 2013). The 6 commitments in the accord are: to improve education and training to ease the school-to-work transition, to connect young people with work experience job placements, to increase public youth employment through youth brigades, to identify sectors that should explicitly focus on bolstering youth employment, to support youth co-operatives and entrepreneurship, and to collaborate with the private sector to improve youth labour absorption (ibid, pp. 18-22). These commitments were also vague, with little explanation as to how certain targets would be achieved. The accord states that "most sustainable new jobs are expected to be created in the private-sector" and therefore prioritises private partnerships, but the nature and process of these partnerships are unexplained (ibid, p. 22). The coordinated response to youth unemployment was thus a hollow repackaging of the pre-existing employment creation initiatives and did not challenge nor replace the failed projects that preceded it.

The NGP ignored many of the recommendations put forward by an international panel of research papers on growth in South Africa in 2008 (National Treasury, 2008). The recommendations of the panel included implementing infrastructure programmes, coordinating industrial policies under newer macroeconomic frameworks, and education initiatives that address skills shortages and apartheid legacies such as spatial patterns (ibid, p. 1). The refusal to address the structural causes of unemployment underpins the neoliberal agenda, focusing instead on sectoral reforms and labour matching exercises. Satgar (2012) placed South Africa's emergence as a neoliberal champion within a broader push for neoliberal transnationalism. Arguing that marketisation policies were guided by the interests of transnational capital, Satgar (2012) pointed out the pitfalls of excessive global competitiveness and the resultant use of governance to protect the interest and power of capital (Satgar, 2012, p. 40).

NDP (2012-2030)

South Africa's current policy framework, the National Development Plan (NDP), is an unequivocal entrenchment of the neoliberal state, couched in misleading language about a developmental state. The NDP is primarily concerned with ending poverty and reducing inequality. It will achieve these goals through greater employment and resolutely posits that achieving this requires South Africa's economy to grow more than 5% per annum (National Planning Commission, 2012, p. 39). The three priorities of the NDP are to increase employment through faster growth, to improve the quality of education and skills development, and to build

the capacity of the state (ibid, p. 27). The framework refers to itself as adopting a "supportive macroeconomic approach" characterised by counter-cyclical fiscal policy and a looser monetary policy that remains committed to inflation targeting (ibid, p. 116). Although fiscal policy is referred to as counter-cyclical, this merely means that government would *consider* expansionary fiscal policy but that its default is to raise savings for investment and to reduce consumption (ibid, p. 115). The NDP's loosening of monetary policy is characterised by the consistent goal of inflation targeting with the addition of using interest rates and the exchange rate to ensure exports remain competitive (ibid, p. 113).

The NDP characterises South Africa's economy as being in a low-growth, middle-income trap and apportions this to inadequate competition, barriers to entering the labour market, low savings, and deficient skills (ibid, p. 38). The NDP states that the economy must be shifted "towards more investment and lower consumption" to respond to this low-growth trap. The logic of this argument is as follows: improving human capital, productivity, and infrastructure will allow South Africa to raise exports. Thereafter, profits from mass exports will be channelled into investment and will therefore reduce the reliance on capital inflows. This increased investment, occurring in an environment of improved infrastructure and improved human capital, will increase productivity further and will encourage faster economic growth. As economic growth occurs, employment increases and this leads to higher standards of living and reduced inequality (ibid, p. 39). The logic described above is a quintessentially export-orientated, trade liberalising growth strategy, which is underpinned by fiscal prudence, and which assumes the eventual realisation of developmental goals through the trickle-down effect, explained earlier through Carmody & Owusu (2016). The economic growth trajectory is heavily dependent on success in the global market and therefore the NDP proposes South Africa relies on its comparative advantage and invests in infrastructure that will explicitly improve export competitiveness (ibid). The dependence on export-led growth is reflective of the neoliberal requirement to prioritise integrating into the global market.

Throughout the NDP, it is reinforced that government should reduce the cost of doing business through deregulation and policy rationalisation. This is directly linked to the reliance the framework places on SMMEs and financialisation. The success of SMMEs is a measure of inclusive growth in the NDP and is also hailed as a key mechanism to support job creation (ibid, p. 140). The NDP requires widespread deregulation of SMMEs and states, without expanding, that gap funding for small businesses "should be addressed". Government encourages entrepreneurship with the SMME model proposes easier entry to entrepreneurial ventures through deregulation. Despite the NDP's findings that the SMME sector largely operates in capital-intensive services, the framework insists that the sector is leveraged for job creation (ibid, p. 142). To increase SMMEs access to capital, the NDP proposes deregulation of financialisation (ibid, p. 40). The possession of a "strong and deep financial services sector" is identified as one of South Africa's comparative advantages (ibid, p. 111). The imperative to deregulate and to create an enabling business environment is informed by the underlying neoliberal assumptions that an unregulated private sector will lead inevitable lead to growth.

The NDP's framing of productive ownership and infrastructure development is illustrative of a neoliberal understanding of the private sector. The NDP identifies that skewed ownership patterns have manifested into a structural, oligopolistic nature of the labour market that is uncompetitive – existing firms dictate labour demand and existing employed dominate as the labour supply (ibid, p. 111). To address the skewed ownership patterns, a legacy from apartheid, the NDP proposes introducing incentives to encourage the private sector to "change

ownership patterns" (ibid, 42). Anticipating that this would not be viable, the long-term plan is to "grow the economy rapidly and focus on spreading opportunities for black people as it grows," (ibid, p. 114). The critical objective of building infrastructure is assigned to the public and private sectors. The public sector will invest and thereafter crowd-in private investment. However, the NDP proposes that, where possible, the long-term goal should be for users to bear the costs of infrastructure (ibid, p. 45). The NDP's proposals frame the state as a negotiating stakeholder who implements policy, regulates the market, and addresses market failures. The state is tasked with coaxing the domestic and foreign private sectors to realise critical policy imperatives and is empowered to do so through weak incentives. The state's lack of capital compels it to seek compliance from the private sector through partnerships to construct basic infrastructure and to virtuously redistribute its resources.

The NDP regards employment creation as pivotal to reducing poverty and inequality, but its employment framework is spineless and leaves little room for state-led, structural initiatives. The key element to improve employment creation in the NDP is developing the abilities of the work force and removing barriers such as poor-quality education and spatial divides (ibid, p. 27). These must be removed in order to improve investment and therefore competitiveness. The NDP commits to introducing employment incentives, expanding public works programmes, investing in public transport, and improving the quality of education (ibid, p. 28). The plan urges the state to take advantage of the demographic dividend through various measures including improved health care and education but also highlights that labour mobility should be increased (ibid, p. 29). There is a preference for supporting and incentivising entrepreneurs and SMMEs, who the state tasks with job creation. Furthermore, public employment schemes are praised but options for expanding their successes is deferred in the NDP (ibid, p. 153). Mechanisms for job creation, and state-mechanisms in particular, are vague in the NDP and priority is given to skills development and training. The plan also lambasts South African citizens who expect the state to deliver and issues a reminder that everyone is responsible for their own personal development (ibid, p. 37). The individualisation of unemployment inherent in policies focusing solely on skills development and the disdain expressed for unemployed jobseekers harks back to the neoliberal insistence on self-investment, and its neoclassical foundation in methodological individualism. Furthermore, it ignores the economy's inability to create jobs and therefore avoids outlining a job creation role for the state. This approach incorrectly assumes that South Africa boasts an abundance of jobs for which the unemployed are underqualified.

Despite setting lofty targets to reduce unemployment, including reducing unemployment to 14% by 2020, the NDP provides no appropriate mechanisms through which these targets will be achieved. The NDP claims that there is "no doubt that market-based employment is the most sustainable source of job creation," but states that the unemployment problem has "become too big for market-based solutions to solve in the next 10 to 20 years" (ibid, p. 153). The inherent contradiction of this policy framework is clearly outlined here – while deep-rooted appreciation for neoliberal dogma underlies the overall strategy of the framework, a feeble critique of market-based solutions outlines the necessary role of the state. Instead of utilising this role of the state, the NDP calls for greater capacity in PPPs and urges government to "treat private actors as partners in policy design and implementation," (National Planning Commission, 2012, p. 155). This internally contradictory approach shows the NDP's lack of self-awareness and results in a complicated, incoherent macroeconomic framework that commits firmly to neoliberal principles regardless of the context.

Since the NDP provides little in the way of youth employment, the NYP of 2015 warrants brief analysis. The NYP elevates the urgency of addressing youth unemployment and zooms in on the low rate of youth labour force absorption, as well as the high level of NEET youth. The NYP suggests broad interventions and maintains the focus on human development through improving literacy and numeracy rates, learner retention, and the training of teachers (National Youth Development Agency, 2015). The policy suggests that government intervene to curb the high youth unemployment rate through tax incentives, government subsidies, expanding the role of state-owned enterprises in hiring young people, supporting young entrepreneurs, and partnering with the private sector to invest in labour-intensive industries (ibid, p. 6). Additionally, government is encouraged to introduce school curricula that teach skills useful for employment, and that allow for young people's work experience. The NYP proposes that government institute land and agricultural reform strategies to explicitly benefit black youth and that the economy be reoriented toward raising labour demand (ibid, p. 16). Although these proposals are still founded on neoliberal assumptions, they envision a more active role for the state, and they propose an alternative to export-orientation.

4.2 Country Profile: Ghana

4.2.1 Review of Ghana's unemployment trends

Ghana's economic trajectory over the past decade has been mixed overall. To avoid the distortions arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and due to the available selection of data, this research report will discuss economic indicators and performance up until 2019. In 2009, Ghana absorbed the effects of the Global Financial Crisis. In the last decade, GDP growth peaked in 2010 at a rate of 14.05%. Despite considerable fluctuations in Ghana's GDP growth rate, it has maintained positive growth throughout this period. In the African Development Bank's African Economic Outlook 2018 Ghana's projected growth was 8.5% in 2018 and 6.2% in 2019. The strong GDP growth projections were based on expectations of better performance by Ghana's non-oil sectors and lowering interest rates. Despite the positive GDP projections, Ghana was at risk of defaulting on its external debt. This default has subsequently occurred, although the exact structuring of repayment has been renegotiated due to Covid-19 (African Forum and Network on Debt and Development, 2023).

In the early 2000s Ghana worked hard to bring its unemployment rate under control – after peaking at 10% in 2000, the national rate had fallen to 3% in 2006. Broadly mimicking the trends of the overall unemployment rate, the youth unemployment rate was high in the early 2000s and was brought down to 8.9% by 2006. Youth unemployment trends in Ghana are difficult to track in Ghana's official statistics as they refer to 'youth' as those aged 15-34, while the UN's definition of youth refers to those aged 15-24. The trajectory of the unemployment rates can be seen in Figure 2. In 2008 the national and youth unemployment rates trended slowly upward once again. According to Ghana's 2008 Living Standards Survey the youth unemployment rate was 4.1% and by 2010 it sat at 11.08% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2008, p. 43). During the period of increase between 2006-2010, the youth unemployment rate rose at a steeper rate than the national unemployment rate. In the subsequent three years, Ghana once again brought its unemployment rates down – reaching its lowest levels in the time period under review. In 2011 Ghana's Socioeconomic Panel Survey reported the most economically

active group were people aged 25-44. Those aged 65 and over were the least economically active, but those between 15-24 had a lower labour force participation rate than children aged 7-14 (Aryeetey, Osei-Akoto, Osei, & Udry, 2011, p. 36). In the report, the Ghanaian youth unemployment rate was noted to be higher than the national unemployment rate – a feature which is consistent throughout this series. Further, the report found that 44% of Ghana's working age population was economically inactive (ibid, pp. 55-57). This presents a case for analysing Ghana's unemployment rates under the expanded definition.

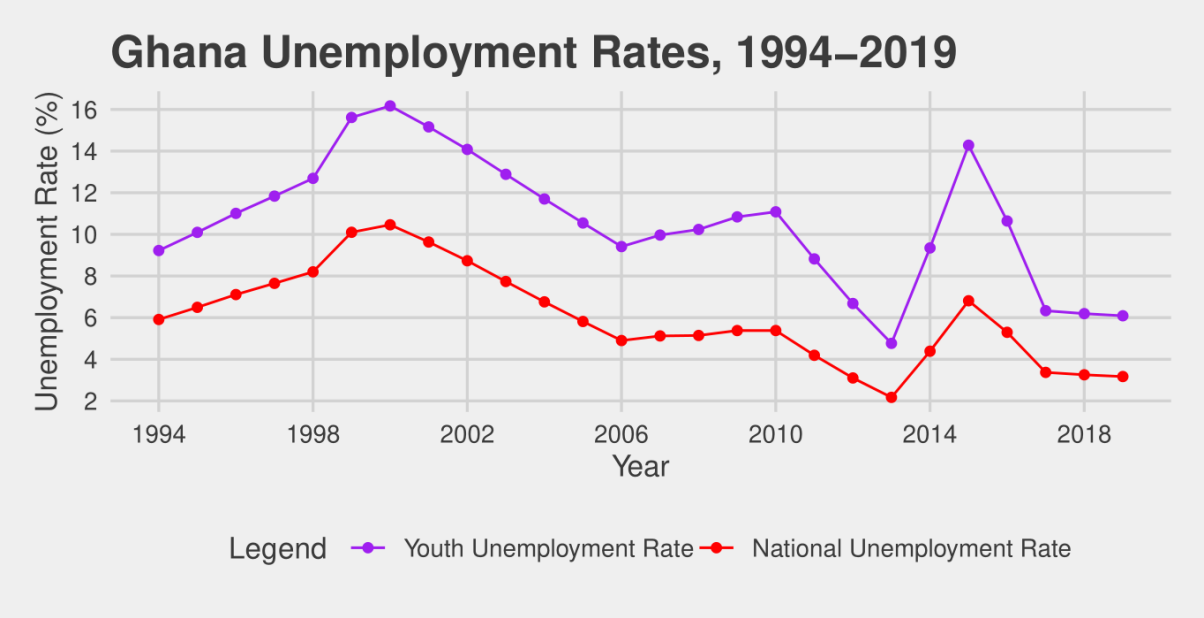
As shown in Figure 2, the unemployment rate recovery was short-lived, with a rapid increase in both unemployment rates in 2013. Ghana's 2013 Three-Cycle Labour Force Report found the two enduring trends of Ghana's economy were still persistent: having a youth unemployment rate higher than the national average and the dominance of agriculture as the largest employer (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 7). In 2014, with the unemployment rate at 4.4%, the GLSS6 Labour Force Report calculated a "vulnerable employment" status of 68.7%. The vulnerably employed included those who were own-account workers and those employed in family enterprises (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014, p. 22). The 2014 report showed that while agriculture was still the sector employing the largest share of the population, in 2014 it employed less than half of Ghanaians. Further, 24.5% of the employed worked in services or sales (ibid, p. 24). This report used Ghana's educational attainment data to explore the "occupational mismatch" by looking at those who had secondary and higher education qualifications but were employed in sales and services (ibid, p. 27). While there is evidence that employment in skilled agriculture decreases as educational attainment increases, there is a clear limit of labour absorption in Ghana's economy for educated workers.

Ghana's 2015 Labour Force Report found that those with a secondary education qualification had the highest unemployment rate at 19.3% followed by those with an education certificate (11.3%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2016, p. 60). Those with a tertiary qualification had the lowest unemployment rate (ibid, p. 61). From 2015 the spike in unemployment began to dip. By 2017 it had stabilised, with the unemployment rate hovering around 3.5% and the youth unemployment rate hovering around 6.5% for the remainder of the series. The stabilising of the unemployment rates is useful in an otherwise erratic experience, but the conditions of employment reflected concerning patterns. The 2018 Ghana Living Standards Survey Round 7 found that a majority of employed Ghanaians were in vulnerable employment (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019, p. 71). The report, citing the rate of informal employment as higher than 70%, stated that "the inability of the formal sector (both public and private) to generate jobs in their required numbers has pushed a large proportion of the population into the informal sector," (ibid, p. 74). By 2018, the youth unemployment rate was 6% while the reported unemployment rate for ages 15-34 was 8% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019, p. 99). Although beyond the scope of this paper, Ghana's relatively stable unemployment rates were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic (International Labour Organization, 2023). While the absolute unemployment and youth unemployment rates are low compared to South Africa, the underlying causes of stubborn unemployment reveal various similarities.

Ghana's employment concerns are two-fold: the issue of unemployment and the issue of underemployment. Unemployment in Ghana has characteristics – it is predominantly a youthful tendency, and it is higher in urban areas. Underemployment in Ghana is characterised by citizens living in rural areas. Young people are particularly vulnerable to unemployment in Ghana, due to a lack of skills and/or the possession of unwanted skills. The determinants of youth unemployment are identified as educational outcomes and gender constraints. Following

the Structural Adjustment Programme imposed on Ghana in the 1980s, public sector employment has fallen, and the sector has been marked by labour vulnerability. Ghana's private sector is not engaged in labour absorbing industries and thus the Ghanaian population is extensively involved in the informal economy. A key concern for Ghana's unemployment rate is the relatively low levels of government investment and the relatively low levels of foreign investment into the economy.

Figure 2



Source: ILO Modelled Estimates (ILOSTAT) Bulk Download Facility

4.2.2 Ghana Policy Trajectory and Analysis

ESAF

Ghana's policies are derived from its Ghana Vision 2020 policy framework developed in 1995 but is also heavily influenced by the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) it approved in the same year. ESAF was a policy developed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and aimed to tackle high levels of inflation (International Monetary Fund, 1998). It was introduced in response to Ghana's economic performance in the early 1990s after the country abandoned the "fiscal discipline" measures adopted in its 1983 Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). The ERP was an IMF market-oriented framework which aimed to stabilise Ghana's macroeconomy through trade liberalisation, fiscal prudence, and other structural reforms (ibid). The ESAF represented a strong recommitment to this approach and was underpinned by the following logic: the country will pursue liberal, market-oriented policies and further structural reforms aimed at stabilising the macroeconomic environment which will give investors and the public greater confidence in the economy and will thus improve levels of private investment. This increase in private investment would supposedly lead to job creation, greater incomes, and reduced poverty levels. Key priorities to achieve this goal included the need for tighter monetary policy and cautious fiscal policy.

Monetary policy under the ESAF aimed to continue reducing inflation and to achieve an 8% inflation rate by 1999, while the Bank of Ghana committed to tightening reserve requirements and enforcing debt repayment to restore faith in the Ghanaian banking system. Fiscal policy under the ESAF focused on generating a primary surplus and reducing government spending. The latter was instituted through the Medium-Term Economic Framework (MTEF) which the World Bank and the UK government contributed to. Additionally, tax collection mechanisms would be improved but the key method of income generation would occur by taxing consumption at higher rates and on additional products like petrol. Implementing these policies was also thought to benefit Ghana's exchange rate, therefore allowing it to remain globally competitive. The policy advocated the gradual liberalisation of Ghana's capital markets, which at the time of the policy had some restrictions on outflows. Finally, the tightening of fiscal policy and incoming concessional financing would aid Ghana in repaying it outstanding debt.

Ghana's National Development Policy Framework 1995 ('Vision 2020')

Ghana's National Development Policy Framework (NDPF), a neoliberal macroeconomic framework, committed the country to implementing neoliberal policies until at least 2020. The NDPF was named 'Ghana Vision 2020' and was developed during the ESAF programme negotiations in 1995. Vision 2020's various sub-frameworks and programmes aimed to propel Ghana to middle-income status by 2020 (Rawlings, 1995, p. iv). These sub-frameworks are the MTDP 1st Step, the I-PRSP, the GPRS, the GSGDA, and the CPESDP. This ultimate goal of middle-income status would be achieved by transforming Ghana's economy into an open, liberal economy founded on competition and innovation but also catering to environmental and distributional needs (ibid, p. 1). In terms of human development, the policy framework aimed to reduce poverty through increased access to social services, increased employment opportunities, and economic improvement for disadvantaged groups (ibid, p. 43). The key proposals to achieving middle economy status are all reflective of neoliberal ideals and explicitly prioritise Ghana's outward orientation.

The framework maintained the ESAF's trade and monetary policies. Export taxes were to be phased out by 2000 and domestic resource mobilisation was prioritised to reduce dependence on foreign financing. The framework targeted an increase in both public savings and household savings (ibid, p. 53). Ghana acknowledged that its previous attempt to bring down inflation using interest rates failed and instead pivots toward improving productivity in the agricultural sector to decrease supply-side pressures on inflation (ibid, p. 54). The policy commits to an inflation target of 8% - which is crucial to its related policy of attracting foreign capital. Inflation targeting is central to maintaining the dominance of finance under neoliberalism. In acknowledging the ineffectiveness of neoliberalism's key mechanism for inflation targeting – using the interest rate – Ghana changed their approach to inflation targeting while preserving the overarching neoliberal logic. Vision 2020's opposing aims of reducing dependence on foreign finance while attracting global capital are left unaddressed. The explicit goal of attracting foreign capital is deeply tied to the neoliberal push for globalisation and financial integration, as mentioned by Poku & Whitman (2018).

Vision 2020's framing of labour issues are deeply neoliberal and are internally contradictory. The framework identified Ghana's agricultural sector as the largest employer and noted that self-employment levels were high. To encourage increased productivity in agriculture, Vision 2020 removed price controls on agricultural output (which it considered as having penalised the sector) and liberalised the produce market. However, the policy itself recognised that liberalisation has meant increased production costs for farmers and thus suggested

compensating or subsidising farmers (ibid, p. 56). This caveat in the policy is a recognition of the internal contradiction of neoliberal policies: price controls are framed as unfair penalties because they impose a regulation on the market which prevents the maximisation of profit, but the State is called on to ameliorate the failures of liberalisation. Trade liberalisation is also said to have broken up monopolistic and oligopolistic actors in the economy while labour unions are blamed for distortions in income distribution.

The looming aspiration for outward orientation was evident even in Ghana's educational policies. It aimed to ensure universal access to and completion of basic education and sought to orientate education toward improving the global competitiveness of Ghanaian labour. It particularly emphasised science and technology. Government also committed to increasing educational and vocational training to equip workers with sought after skills, while encouraging private capital to invest in labour-absorbing enterprises. Training was geared toward supporting self-employment and encouraging proficiency in business and management. Issues of unemployment and underemployment, particularly relating to the youth, were to be addressed through apprenticeships, improving the legal framework of informal employment, and changing the public administration (ibid, p. 46). Vision 2020 positioned the educational system as a means of meeting the demands of global capital.

Despite widespread poverty and precarity, the framework concedes to neoliberal logic on its minimum wage policy. It was hesitant to establish a high minimum wage due to fear that this would prejudice poor people who were willing to work for below the minimum wage. To harmonise this fear and the opposing principle of increasing social services, Ghana opted to set a minimum wage at a purposely low value. The prioritisation of improving working conditions gave way to outdated theories of labour. The explicit assumption here is that wages set higher than the self-determined market wage will lead to a lowering of labour demand and an increase of labour supply, leading to higher levels of unemployment. This assumption is fundamental to the neoclassical model of the labour market and is tied to the axiom of methodological equilibration mentioned earlier (Arnsperger & Varoufakis, 2006, p. 11). Empirically, this neoclassical conception of the minimum wage has not held up to scrutiny. Conversely, a minimum wage set at an appropriate rate is associated with "reduction of wages for higher-end earners, trimming profit margins, [and] boosts to aggregate demand," (Isaacs, 2016, pp. 41-43). Despite evidence to the contrary, Ghana's policy framework committed to the flawed framing of a minimum wage imposed by neoliberal thinking.

Vision 2020's sub-frameworks

The First Step, GPRS, GSGDA, CPESDP

The First Step (1996-2000)

The First Step of the Ghana Vision 2020 was intended to kickstart the implementation of the overarching NDPF. The First Step was thus primarily focused on improving human development outcomes, achieving substantial GDP growth, developing rural areas, supporting the proliferation of urbanisation, and to establish the enabling environment needed for the private sector to flourish (Rawlings, 1995, p. ix). In working towards the objective of the Vision, the First Step prioritised "poverty alleviation; enhancing Ghana's human resources; increasing employment opportunities; and strengthening social infrastructure and services," (Rawlings, 1995, p. 42). The First Step clearly signalled that henceforth, Ghana's macroeconomic framework would be defined by the goal of macroeconomic stability. This goal was central to consolidating "the foundations needed for accelerated economic and social

development," (ibid, p. viii). The First Step thus does not represent an all-encompassing sub-framework but sought to ready the country and the economy for forthcoming macroeconomic commitments.

GPRS (GPRS I: 2003-2005 and GPRS II: 2005-2009)

The complete character of Vision 2020 was emblemised in the Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) as it reifies the macroeconomic stability aims of neoliberalism. The GPRS aimed to "create wealth by transforming the nature of the economy," through growth, poverty reduction, protection of the vulnerable, and democratisation (Republic of Ghana, 2003, p. i). It detailed policies to be implemented between 2002-2004 and reflected on the lack of success of the First Step of Vision 2020. Obstacles included the lack of political will to implement the Plan and insufficient budget allocations due to poor co-ordination between the National Development Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance (ibid, p. 1). Reflecting on statistical results from surveys, the GPRS aimed to create "sustainable equitable growth" through a collaboration between government, civil society, and the private sector (ibid, p. 30). This strategy promised to ensure economic stability and sought to position the private sector as the main driver of growth. In 2003 Ghana had a high inflation rate and an external debt to GDP ratio of 120% - characteristics the GPRS attributed to previous policy errors including mismanagement and an over-ambitious government plan that was not possible with limited resources (ibid, p. 31).

Through its macroeconomic framing, this strategy deepened the conception of a neoliberal Ghanaian state. Aiming for a growth rate of 6 % per annum, the key role for the State was to create an enabling environment for the private sector through regulation and control (ibid, p. 35). In this vein, parastatals and state-owned banks would be privatised, and Ghana would move from being "a government-centred economy to a private sector led economy," (ibid, p. 34). In terms of structural change, the strategy called for agriculture's industrialisation led by increased foreign direct investment and commercialisation. The foundation of this programme was for government to allow the private sector to drive growth in the country and to prioritise transforming the agricultural sector. This diminishing role for the State and dominance of the private sector is an explicitly neoliberal characteristic. As mentioned by Poku & Whitman (2018), neoliberalism aims to maximise the private accumulation of wealth through deregulation and privatisation. The 'environment' enabled by a neoliberal state refers to deregulation that allows the private sector to operate as freely as possible, while privatising state-owned entities enables greater private sector control over the economy. Dependence on the private sector is not limited to the local private sector, as is clear from the GPRS plans to attract foreign investment into agriculture. This reflects the previously mentioned globalisation goals of neoliberalism (Poku & Whitman, 2018) and the characterisation of Ghana as a neoliberal state. The GPRS' public reform programme was an exercise in minimising the state and empowering the private sector, thus entrenching neoliberal hegemony in Ghana (Crawford & Abdulai, 2009, pp. 96-98).

The GPRS' attempt to address unemployment were informed by ideology, not evidence. The employment policy of the GPRS was to create an enabling environment for the private sector to conduct its activities, which would eventually culminate in greater investment and greater employment (Republic of Ghana, 2003, p. 69). The importance of public employment schemes is reiterated in the GPRS but is characterised as a short-term stop gap that should eventually be replaced by private sector employment (ibid, p. 71). The promotion of private sector-led employment included casting FDI as an employment creator (ibid, p. 51) and pushing for entrepreneurial development (ibid, p. 71). Palmer (2007) critiqued the lack of review and

evaluation of previous employment programmes in Ghana, arguing that without an analysis of the effectiveness of these programmes the proposed skills programmes were not evidenced-based (Palmer, 2007, p. 26). The broader critique made by Palmer is that the implicit assumptions of Ghana's policies are unproven and are instead axiomatic assumptions – including the assumption that vocational training will lead to greater levels of self-employment and that tailoring secondary school courses to labour market demands will lead to greater employability (Palmer, 2007, pp. 21-22). Neoliberalism's dependency on axiomatic assumptions was discussed by Arnsperger & Varoufakis (2006) and the neoclassical imposition of individualised responsibility for employment was discussed by Peters (2016).

GSGDA (GSDGA I: 2010-2013 & GSGDA II: 2014-2017)

The subsequent Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) was an unequivocal restating of Ghana's national neoliberal goals. GSGDA was implemented in two parts from 2010-2013 and from 2014-2017. The thematic areas of the GSGDA were to first and foremost establish macroeconomic stability, then to increase Ghana's competitiveness, to industrialise the agricultural sector, to develop oil and gas production, to develop infrastructure, to improve human development outcomes, and to ensure transparent governance (Government of Ghana, 2010, p. 6). The GSGDA was developed in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, and thus the importance of stability is re-emphasised throughout. The strategy aimed at "reducing poverty through a pro-poor, export-led growth strategy based on modernizing agriculture and linking it to industry in an emerging oil and gas economy," (ibid p. 7). The goals of the strategy included building up Ghana's financial sector and deepening its capital markets, maintaining the fiscal deficit at a sustainable level, diversifying exports, and centring employment in its macroeconomic agenda (ibid, pp. 15-37). Ghana committed to removing trade barriers and implementing public-private partnerships. The export-led growth strategy is a key element of neoliberal ideology, where a country leverages its comparative advantage on the international market to drive development. Ghana earmarked the agricultural, oil, and gas sectors as strategic in its export-orientation. Prioritising macroeconomic stability underscores all other policy directives in this programme. Reflecting Fine & Filho's (2014) distinction between the two phases of neoliberalism, the post-crisis GSGDA promotes reintroduces some role for the state in the form of public-private partnerships. Despite the effects of the Global Financial Crisis, the GSGDA aims for greater and deeper financialisation, further pursuing the second phase of neoliberalism.

The employment policies of the GSGDA elevated the role of the private sector and relied on continuing neoliberalism. The programme demarcated the private sector as the custodian of employment creation and spotlighted self-employment. In addition to 'mainstreaming' employment issues across government, the programme sought to promote employment opportunities, to encourage skills development, and to strengthen labour administration (Government of Ghana, 2010, p. 110). It was unclear how these employment opportunities would be created, but it is presumed to be through private sector employment creation. Poku-Boansi & Afrane (2011) argued that Ghana would need institutional support to achieve its self-employment targets and suggested the integration of entrepreneurship and innovation into basic education (Poku-Boansi & Afrane, 2011, p. 85). Positioning entrepreneurship as a focal point of basic education is a continuation of neoliberal logic and again links education to private sector priorities, as the GPRS did. The Ghanaian employment strategy rested on two pillars: the private sector is responsible for creating jobs, and self-employment by individuals must be encouraged. The former echoes the mass drive for privatisation under neoliberalism, while the

latter reflects the neoliberal conception of personal investment by the individual entrepreneur – referenced earlier in the work of Peters (2016).

The policies and initiatives that would implement the GSGDA were keenly aware of the youth unemployment crisis but presented poorly coordinated initiatives in response. The National Youth Policy identified the substantial gap between the skills young Ghanaians attain through school and what the labour market demands – implying a need for educational reforms and improving the school-to-work transition. Subsequent policies committed to improving the quality of and access to education at all levels, including the construction of 200 Community Senior High Schools and the promotion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Government of Ghana, 2014, p. 136). In addition to and perhaps because of the high unemployment rate, youth in Ghana are highly susceptible to poverty, hunger, and disease. The Youth in Agriculture Programme committed to building infrastructure to encourage and enable long-term youth employment in food production (Ministry of Food and Agriculture).

However, the GSGDA II aimed "to create at least 500 000 jobs in the formal sector by 2017," and envisioned most of these jobs being in services (sanitation and waste management, tourism, finance). GSGDA II also committed to designing and implementing a Labour-Intensive Public Works policy framework and contributing GH₵10 million to the Youth Enterprise Support (YES) fund (Government of Ghana, 2014, pp. 137-138). The YES fund formed part of the explicit encouragement of self-employment and focused on equipping Ghanaians with entrepreneurial and market-demanded skills. Employment into labour-intensive industries would be promoted by government, but it was not mentioned what government's role was in risk-taking to bolster labour-absorbing industries nor to create jobs in these industries. Government's relatively small role was to allocate funding to promote employment in these sectors, to manage job databases, and to ensure implementation of labour policies. Agencies such as the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) are given a stronger mandate to create jobs, but there remains a distinct focus on encouraging entrepreneurship. The GSGDA youth employment strategies are therefore contradictory and uncoordinated – labour intensity is promoted, but there is a bias toward employment in the capital-intensive services sector; government's role is primarily to finance self-employment training and developing new industries, but its spending is hamstrung due to fiscal consolidation.

Analysis of Ghana's Vision 2020 reflect on its neoliberal character and its consequent inability to address unemployment. There was consensus that neoliberal policies had led to economic growth and had some positive effects on job creation, but the neoliberal period undoubtedly resulted in inequality increasing, an undiversified Ghanaian economy, the continued dependence on exporting raw materials, a heavy reliance on foreign donors and aid, poor employment growth in labour-intensive sectors, and the persistence of unemployment and poverty in Ghana (Obeng-Odoom, 2012; Baah-Boateng, 2013; Ayelazuno, 2013). Obeng-Odoom (2012) described Vision 2020 as centring the private sector as the main driver of growth and institutionalising the retreat of the state, while aiming to attract foreign investment (ibid, pp. 92-93). Despite the positive impact of private capital on job creation, Obeng-Odoom critiqued the increase in urban and national inequality. This contradiction in progress emerges due to the neoliberal implication that private-led growth and private-led investment will inevitably lead to adequate employment growth. Neoliberal policies in Ghana slashed public employment, facilitated the agglomeration of private capital in urban areas, encouraged the proliferation of small firms, and led to the overall lowering of wages (ibid, pp. 95-100). Obeng-

Odoom proposed that Ghana return to a state-led development agenda and explained that small firms and the informal sector were unable to absorb labour.

Baah-Boateng (2013) recognised that Ghana's economic growth occurred without employment growth in labour-intensive sectors. The economy also failed to generate levels of aggregate demand that would encourage greater employment. To address this, Baah-Boateng suggested the state promote investment into agriculture and industry. Baah-Boateng's research indicated that those who sought self-employment had a higher incidence of unemployment, therefore implying that constraints prevent young entrepreneurs from becoming job creators (Baah-Boateng, 2013, p. 397). To rectify this, Baah-Boateng advocated for the removal of constraints to self-employment. This suggestion is reflected in much of the existing Ghana policy including the very framework which Baah-Boateng critiques. Despite the apparent inability for self-employment to drive employment creation, Ghana has persisted with this framing.

Ayelazuno (2013) questioned why Ghana's strict obedience to neoliberalism had not yielded all the results promised. Its industrial policy was weak and had not materialised into a strong manufacturing sector. The retreat of the state beginning with the SAPs has facilitated the deindustrialisation of Ghana and the flourishing of extractive industries by foreign capital (Ayelazuno, 2013, p. 92). The GDP growth was praised by neoliberal economists and institutions, but its success was qualified with admissions that Ghana's economic structure remained weak, its growth rate was unsustainable, its economy was not generating employment, and that the absolute growth of GDP did not translate into better living conditions for majority of the country (ibid, pp. 85-86). In the international community, these shortcomings were attributed to Ghana's inadequate implementation of neoliberalism, with particular blame placed on its institutions. Despite the clear failure of neoliberal policy to sustainably address Ghana's unemployment, it was encouraged to renew its commitment to neoliberalism and to undergo extensive institutional reform.

CPESDP (2017-2024)

Ghana's current policy framework, the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (CPESDP) is a reiteration of the centrality of private sector led growth and employment. The CPESDP is themed as "An Agenda for Jobs" and spans 2017-2024. Despite being an agenda for jobs, it primarily promotes the private sector and assumes that employment will be created once the private sector is allowed to flourish. It presumes this despite evidence to the contrary, even from Ghana's own experience. The key aim of the CPESDP is to double Ghana's GDP per capita by 2024. The main levers to achieve this are to stabilise the economy, to revive manufacturing, to address the energy crisis, and to "aggressively" improve exports (ibid, p. 56).

Additionally, Ghana's monetary discipline will be enforced through stronger inflation targeting to keep inflation below 10 %, deepening financial markets, encouraging the listing of companies, and implementing structural reforms (ibid, p. 56). Fiscal discipline is emphasised through the adoption of tighter fiscal controls. Further, Ghana's tax base will be broadened by taxing economically active informal traders and/or undocumented citizens. Taxation of the informal sector is a contentious issue which requires deep engagement with the country's context. Research by ActionAid reflected on how taxing the informal sector homogenously can be severely "income and gender regressive," (ActionAid, 2018, p. 3). Further, undocumented citizens and informal traders already pay taxes in various informs including VAT. Thus, attempts to introduce additional tax on these groups must be progressive in design to avoid

entrenching marginalisation. The programme mentions reducing tax exemptions and abolishing other taxes and levies, but it is unclear which taxes this refers to (ibid, p. 59). In urging fiscal prudence, the framework introduces new procurement processes and greater oversight on state-owned enterprises. The monetary policy imposed by the CPESDP shows little departure from Ghana's neoliberal foundation as it maintains inflation targeting, proposes regressive taxation measures, requires vague structural reforms, and aims to deepen financialisation.

The CPESDP's industrial policy is marked by a clear tension between the need for state-led industrialisation and Ghana's devotion to neoliberal policy. Likely due to Vision 2020's failures, the CPESDP prescribes a more detailed industrial policy and prioritises an industrial transformation through replacing imported raw materials with local products, aligning research institutions toward industrialisation goals, establishing apprenticeships and training programmes for labour upskilling, and increasing access to land for multi-purpose industrial parks (ibid). The framework identifies oil and iron production, automotives, textiles, and heavy machinery as anchor industries to be leveraged internationally thereby encouraging exports and attracting private investment. Industrial activities expect to be boosted due to the following: planned improvement in electricity supply, production of gas and oil, reducing import tariffs on intermediate goods, and reducing the cost of doing (ibid, p. 57). To ensure sectoral linkages in industrial value chains and to improve productive capacity of SMEs, the Industrial Sub-Contracting Exchange encourages SMEs to feed into the production process of large-scale enterprises. Through a Stimulus Fund, funds will be disbursed to viable local companies in distress who meet certain criteria including a high potential for job creation, sound financial and accounting reporting, good corporate governance, and previous operational or commercial success. The ability to export is an added advantage. The continued emphasis on good governance in the industrial policy reflects what Poku & Whitman (2018) characterised as a shift toward sidelining popular critique in favour of allowing neoliberal policy to dictate outcomes. Under the pretence of good governance and structural reforms, neoliberal agendas are imposed by dominant financial lenders and are then institutionalised as so-called best practice (Poku & Whitman, 2018, p. 10). While recordkeeping is essential, requiring extensive accounting and corporate governance reports in order to disburse funding likely to be prohibitive.

Job creation in the agricultural and aquacultural sectors is emphasised while the establishment of factories is given particular attention. The One District One Factory initiative is a public-private partnership (PPP) aiming to establish medium-to-large scale enterprises in Ghana's districts and focuses on attracting private investment for industrialisation. It also proposes the establishment of community-based public/private partnerships (ibid, p. 63). This programme intends to create massive employment (350 000 direct jobs) benefiting the youth in rural and peri-urban areas while encouraging each district to exploit its comparative advantage. The PPP model has been criticised as an "accounting trick" which governments use to shift borrowing risk, and which private sectors use to cement themselves in permanent markets for basic services. In its assessment of PPPs internationally, Public Service International concluded that "PPPs are used conceal public borrowing, while providing long-term state guarantees for profits to private companies," (Hall, 2014). PPPs generally cost more than direct public financing, they entrench or create monopolies, the contracts often obfuscate transparency and accountability, they are used to maximise private profit, and they do not necessarily lead to greater efficiency (Hall, 2014, pp. 38-46). Miraftab (2004) warned that PPPs risked being a trojan horse – ushering in deeper neoliberalism disguised as efficient collaboration. The

decentralisation model central to PPPs undermines the role of the state and facilitates the privatisation of services, often boasting community input without challenging the dominance of the private sector over public and community actors (Miraftab, 2004, pp. 91, 97). The programme aims to transform the sector into a "more strategic, business-centred and demand-driven" one and aims to establish Ghana as "the most business-friendly country in Africa," (ibid, p. 65) thereby attracting private investment and broadening the private sector. To this end, the informal sector will be formalised through various administrative processes and widespread financialisation. The formalisation of informal activities is explicitly linked to increasing financialisation, thus allowing for the continued integration of Ghana into the global financial system.

In recognising the importance of encouraging and protecting local industries, the CPESDP advocates for import-substitution. However, its alignment to neoliberalism commits it to international trade and outward orientation. The programme thus simultaneously promotes import-substitution and export-orientation. This contradictory approach emerges as an attempt by Ghana to reconcile the ineffectiveness of previous attempts at export-orientation, with the requirement of global financial capital to integrate into the global market. Import-substitution policies are an acknowledgement of the need to build up domestic industries and improve employment. Despite this, Ghana maintains its neoliberal character by undermining import-substitution with export-orientation. This reflects a core characteristic of neoliberalism – appropriate policy choices are subdued in order to prioritise the earnings of global finance holders and to provide exports to the global market at favourable prices. Industrialisation is thus expected to be privately financed, with significant foreign investment; and the products of industrialisation are to be exported. Employment creation thus emerges as a useful biproduct of this process while the state continues to play a managerial role and the private sector dominates the trajectory of industrialisation.

The CPESDP correctly identifies hindrances to employment creation but again is compelled to implement neoliberal solutions. It identifies the increasing share of services contributing to Ghana's GDP and points out that despite a steady decline in its GDP contribution, agriculture still holds the largest share of employment (Republic of Ghana, 2017, p. 10). This points to the service sector's capital-intensity and the inability of services to absorb labour at necessary rates. To directly address unemployment, the framework calls for creating an enabling business environment and formalising the informal economy within a broader aim of ensuring decent work. Here the government commits to various labour protection practices, improving the link between social protection and employment, and supporting the growth of businesses. The framework also commits to "mainstreaming labour-intensive methods" in government employment initiatives, to ensure appropriate affirmative action, and to introduce a job impact assessment for government initiatives (ibid, pp. 79-80). Ghana's labour force will be marked by high levels of productivity through the implementation of a Labour Market Information System, by linking civil servants' pay with productivity, and by introducing life-long upskilling (ibid, p. 107). In 2017 the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP) was introduced to provide technical and/or financial assistance to small businesses and start-ups. The NEIP seeks to use entrepreneurship to promote industrial development. The youth development objective of the CPESDP identifies the need to improve youth participation in Ghana's socio-economic development and political governance (ibid, pp. 77-78). Some mechanisms here are to mainstream youth issues in policies, to link education programmes and the labour market in a systematic way, to foster partnerships between education institutes and Ghanaian companies, increase youth access to productive resources, and skills development in

STEM as well as self-employment (ibid, pp. 77-78). These measures are repeated policy proposals from Vision 2020 and show little imagination. These policies imply a consistent reliance on the private sector to create necessary jobs, while the state continues to direct its resources toward servicing the private sector.

Ghana's National Development Plan is the revised national vision for the country, spanning from 2018-2057. Although beyond the scope of this report, the NDP is a continuation of neoliberal policies and proposes educational PPPs and youth upskilling. In its reflection that youth in Ghana have higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, are less likely to find full-time employment, and are more likely to experience poor working conditions, it provides a comprehensive entrenchment of Ghana as a quintessentially neoliberal economy.

Ghana's short-lived orientation toward state-led development was quickly replaced by neoliberalism. The state's initial commitments to expanding the public sector and developing key infrastructure were undermined after a deep recession and ballooning debt forced Ghana to approach the IMF for assistance (Obeng-Odoom, 2012, p. 90). Due to its sustained transformation from state-led policy frameworks to market-centred neoliberal frameworks, Ghana is hailed as "the best case of the rise of neoliberalism in Africa" (ibid, p. 85). Despite this reputation, Ghana's deep commitment to neoliberalism has not yielded the results it desperately needs.

4.3 Country Profile: Uganda

4.3.1 Review of Uganda's Unemployment Trends

The Ugandan economy's growth since the early 1990s has gained international praise for its relative consistency and pace. Its unemployment rate has been more erratic – hovering at a relatively low rate but experiencing both upward and downward trends for extended periods of time. Uganda's principal Labour Force Survey Report in 2002 made findings relating to unemployment which are recurringly relevant in later surveys. The Report found that the youth unemployment rate was substantially higher than the national unemployment rate. Although the youth in the report were defined as those aged 18-30, the standardised ILO estimates presented in Figure 3 find the same trend. The highest rate of unemployment was found in the group aged 20-29, while female unemployment was higher than males. Those with no schooling had the lowest unemployment rate, compared to those with secondary schooling and above who had the highest unemployment rate (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2003, pp. 31-35). In addition to these baseline findings, the 2002 National Census found that agriculture employed 77% of working Ugandans (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002, p. 16). The Labour Market Indicator Status Report also revealed unemployment in Uganda as a particularly urban and youth problem, with at least 50% of all unemployed people being youth (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2006, pp. 45-47).

Figure 3 shows the rise in the unemployment rate from 2005 to 2009. The 2007 Millennium Development Goal Report of cautioned that Uganda's inability to implement "explicit measures to create employment" would continue to disproportionately affect women (UNDP, 2007, p. 13). Such measures included the desperate need to industrialise agriculture due to the sector's slow growth (ibid). The Ugandan economy was characterised by very high levels of self-employment, implying stagnation in the formal economy. Majority of the employed were concentrated in the agricultural sector and employed in low-productivity, low-wage, and precarious work. The cause of Uganda's struggle to create productive employment

opportunities – and particularly for the youth - was assigned to low levels of investment into productive capacity, due to insufficient foreign and domestic capital (ibid, p. 64). With regards to global integration, Uganda was struggling to increase demand for its exports but maintained high levels of imports. This trade deficit has been financed by financial aid.

The country had seen an average annual GDP growth rate of 9.6% in the three years before the global financial crisis in 2008 (van Waeyenberge & Bargawi, 2011, p. 4). Since then, the sectoral contribution to GDP shifted significantly in the country. Agriculture contributed to more than half of the country's GDP in 1990 but by 2008 it contributed below 20%. The dominance of agriculture was replaced by the dominance of the service sector, which has been responsible for much of Uganda's economic growth in the last two decades. Despite the decreasing economic contribution of agriculture to GDP, the labour force of Uganda was and is disproportionately employed in the agricultural sector. Uganda's improvements in overall economic activity reduced poverty levels considerably, but employment trends were largely unchanged, and the period of economic growth was correlated with higher levels of income inequality (ibid, p. 6). Ssewanyana et al (2009) raised concerns with Uganda's dependence on developed countries after the crisis. Uganda was vulnerable to global shocks in three distinct ways: significant decreases in demand for its exports, changes to foreign direct investment patterns, and cuts to foreign aid (Ssewanyana et al, 2009, pp. 5-10).

The report asserted that "wage employment in the private sector [was] bound to reduce," and that without economic intervention Uganda's unemployment would rise (ibid, p. 13). These unemployment effects are seen in Figure 3, with the youth unemployment rate particularly elevated. The dominance of agriculture has meant that shocks to this sector affect the country's export trends and employment levels. Despite its progress in reducing poverty, Uganda identified that many obstacles remained in order to achieve reduction targets. As poverty reduction in Uganda has largely been linked to income earnings, the ability to earn income through appropriate employment is of critical importance (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2010, p. 13). Of those Ugandans who were formally employed in 2009/2011, more than 50% had transitioned to informal employment by 2010/2011 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2013, p. 12). Despite the country's growth rebound post-2008, the benefits of growth "did not benefit the poor," (ibid, p. 13).

Uganda's industrial and services sectors had been growing, but these sectors struggled to absorb sufficient labour. While agriculture's contribution to GDP was declining, it remained Uganda's "major employment-intensive sector," (Mbowa et al., 2013, p. 2). Youth employed in agriculture had been falling relative to total youth employment, but due to the structure of Uganda's economy and the limited job creation capacities of industry, this meant higher levels of youth unemployment and underemployment. Industry jobs were increasing in the urban areas, but in rural Uganda agriculture remained the preeminent destination for labour (ibid, p. 28). The National Labour Force Survey in 2012 reported narrow unemployment rate of 2.1% and a broad unemployment rate of 4.1% (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2013, p. 61). The Ugandan economy consistently marked by high levels of self-employment, and high levels of employment (self and otherwise) in agriculture (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014, p. 174).

Uganda's economic growth before Covid-19 was promising, reflecting the general trend in East Africa in 2018 (African Development Bank, 2018, p. 8). The national unemployment rate dropped in 2013 but began rising shortly after. Prior to Covid-19, the unemployment rate was around 3%. The AfDB projected Uganda's GDP growth rate to reach 5.9% in 2018 (African Development Bank, 2018, p. 117), attributing this strong macroeconomic outlook to Uganda's

"cautious expansionary fiscal policy," its infrastructure investment, and its improved agricultural production (ibid, p. 117).

Youth in Uganda face particular challenges in relation to employment, as documented in the 2015 School to Work Transition (SWT) Survey. The country's job crisis had led to increased vulnerability of young people through higher unemployment rates, lower quality jobs, substantial labour market inequalities between different groups of youth, longer and more insecure school-to-work transitions, and increased detachment from the labour market. Despite school enrolment increasing, Ugandan education is marked by high volumes of early leavers and very little post-secondary schooling. More than half of Ugandan youth had either not completed primary school or had not attended school at all. Educational attainment is an intergenerational phenomenon in Uganda, as most youth have the same level of educational attainment as their parents. Many young people left school early to find work and due to the increasing cost of education. There is an advantage to leaving school early in Uganda, as shown by respective unemployment rates. Nganwa et al (2015) summarised that "unemployment is lower among persons with no education and primary education, and higher among those with secondary education and above…By implication, the higher the level of education the more likely one is unemployed," (Nganwa et al., 2015, pp. 5, 13). The unemployment rate was higher among highly educated Ugandans, but the highly educated Ugandans who did find jobs benefitted from higher wages and better jobs.

These unemployment dynamics incentivise school leaving and self-employment. Due to high rates of school leaving, 70% of youth were undereducated for their jobs in the SWT Survey. Despite ambitions to work in the public or professional sector, the lack of available jobs persuaded unemployed youth to seek jobs in the sales sector. The inability of the sales sector to absorb labour at the required rates has led to high levels of self-employed youth, while 71% of employed youth were vulnerably employed. The majority of vulnerably employed youth were employed via verbal agreements on very low wages, engaging in precarious work irregularly. Of self-employed youth, 35% of them became self-employed because they were unable to find other employment.

In 2016/2017, the youth unemployment rate was 13%. Most youth were employed in agriculture, followed by services, and less than 20% of employed youth worked in the production sector. Further, 40% of those aged 18-30 were NEET and 45% of all adults were not economically active (mostly owing to worker discouragement). The majority of the employed had no trade nor technical expertise. The survey also found that 85% of the population were not involved in labour unions (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

More recent labour force surveys found that young people aged 18-30 were overrepresented in unpaid care work, comprising 80% of unpaid carers (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2019, p. 58). The 2018/2019 ALFS recorded a broad youth unemployment rate of 19% (ibid, p. 70). Uganda has high levels of worker discouragement and a persistently high rate of young people NEET (ibid, p. 144). A further complexity was that as Ugandans aged, they were more likely to stay in unemployment. Possible explanations were that unemployed youth may lose credibility in hiring processes, youth who continue to study become overqualified for the level of available jobs in Uganda, and that disillusionment of the unemployed tends to grow over time (Egessa et al., 2021).

A 2014 ACODE policy brief suggested that government focus on equipping youth with computing, technical and engineering skills as the Youth Livelihood programme (YLP) was seen as insufficient (Magelah & Ntambirweki-Karugonjo, Infosheet No.26, 2014). The YLP was aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment, but it was under resourced given the demand. The policy brief further blamed lack of finance and the poor attitude of young people for the high rates of unemployment. This framing of young people as being lazy is a capitalist assertion which rests on the neoclassical hyper individualisation. It does this to avoid systemic analysis of the economy and of the macroeconomic framework. ACODE further suggested that the government liberalise in order to grow the economy.

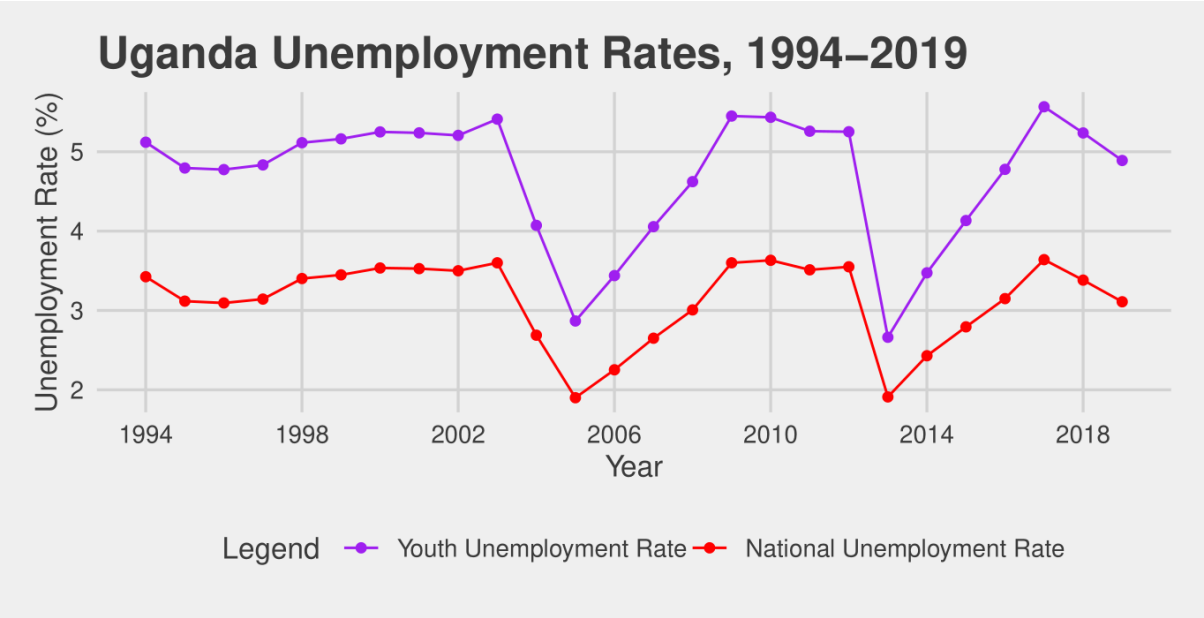
In responding to these findings, Axelrad et al (2018) argued that youth unemployment was derived from labour market characteristics and not the attributes of young people (Axelrad, 2018, p. 5). Urban youth were more likely to be unemployed, which the authors attributed to the stricter requirements of formal work which predominates the urban environment. The authors praise the flexibility and lucidity of the Ugandan informal sector, claiming that it allows for greater youth employment opportunities. An additional discrepancy in the urban-rural analysis is that although women were more likely to find employment than men nationally, men were more likely than woman to be employed in urban areas. This points to women's extensive involvement in the informal economy.

The ALFS report recommended Uganda strengthen PPPs, fast-track the implementation of its urban development plan, improve vocational training, and strengthen existing government employment programmes. Ssewenyana et al (2009) stated that "Uganda [was] steadfast on control of inflation as the overarching macroeconomic policy objective" (Ssewenyana et al, 2009, p. 12), ng its interest rate mechanism to bring down its double-digit inflation. Given this context, suggestions included designing a curriculum that lends itself to youth employability, gathering input from urban youth, and increasing the availability of working capital to the youth (Egessa et al., 2021).

Van Waeyenberge & Bargawi (2011) posited that the capacity for economic growth to affect poverty is determined by two key factors: the extent to which the growth is linked to increasing employment intensity and the ability of the impoverished to access the benefits arising from increased employment opportunities (ibid, p. 7). Van Waeyenberge & Bargawi argue that Uganda requires an alternative, employment centric macroeconomic framework. Further, the required employment-intensive structural change needs accompanying sectoral policies. In terms of fiscal policy, the authors urge Uganda to direct public investment toward employment-generation activities in a flexible manner. Uganda's austerity measures had narrowed the fiscal deficit, but the report suggests a move toward progressive taxation that will combine public investment and labour market policies. The authors suggest that low interest credit allocations be strategically made to priority sectors, while also addressing supply-side blockages. This credit should be explicitly linked to employment creation, while subsidised credit could be offered to employment-generating businesses (Pollin, 2006). The IMF's international reserve floors have determined Uganda's flexible exchange rate policy, but the authors suggest the long-term pursuit of a more competitive exchange rate that is flexible enough to adjust to market volatility. Additionally, capital goods should receive subsidies in order to accelerate infrastructure development. In contrast to the World Bank approach, van Waeyenberge & Bargawi advocates for stronger capital account management and capital controls.

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Figure 3



Source: ILO Modelled Estimates (ILOSTAT) Bulk Download Facility

4.3.2 Uganda Policy Trajectory and Analysis

Uganda IMF Policy Frameworks

SAP (1980s) & Economic Recovery Programme (1987-1997)

Uganda's relationship with the IMF dates to its Structural Adjustment Programme in the early 1980s and its Economic Recovery Programme from 1987-1997, but this relationship was solidified in the 1997 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The PEAP underwent various iterations in the country, but its stated goal was always to end poverty wherever it was implemented. It was implemented in Uganda from 1997-2008 and provided the foundation for most policy frameworks that followed - emphasising macroeconomic stability, inflation targeting, reliance on donor aid, good governance, and directed expenditure for poverty priorities (International Monetary Fund, 2000). The macroeconomic stability doctrine is quintessentially neoliberal and is predictably accompanied by inflation targeting. The reliance on donor aid is intended to ensure the continuous enforcement of neoliberal policies, imposed on Uganda by donor organisations like the IMF.

ESAF (1992-2002)

From 1999 to 2002, Uganda implemented the IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF). This policy framework reflected on Uganda's past economic growth and progress toward reducing poverty but admitted that government spending on "growth-oriented and anti-poverty programmes" needed bolstering (International Monetary Fund, 1999). The ESAF was introduced to allow Uganda to achieve the PEAP's objectives. It urged the continuance of prudent macroeconomic policies, it identified where state spending should be directed, and it removed constraints to private investment. These elements of the ESAF are fundamentally neoliberal in character and are accompanied by other explicit neoliberal directives such as privatising public entities to improve efficiency, liberalising capital markets, deepening the financial sector, removing trade barriers and tariffs, and reorientating agriculture into a viable commercial sector (ibid).

PEAP (1997-2008)

The 2000 iteration of the PEAP considered the many dimensions of poverty, explicitly including "low levels of education…" and "unemployment," as two key issues to address (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2000). The PEAP also identified the need to expand employment in the industrial and service sectors. It clearly links the creation of stable employment with the eradication of poverty and prioritises the creation of formal employment. Formalising employment would occur through increased labour flexibility and labour market deregulation. Two of the National Youth Policy's key objectives were to "promote social and economic empowerment of the youth," and to "create gainful employment," (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2001, p. 12). The policy is intended to guide progress in identified sectors relating to youth empowerment. Its framework clearly links education and skills development to labour market outcomes, and it emphasises the importance of involving various stakeholders.

Uganda National Development Policy Framework (CNDPF) – Vision 2040

The contemporary development agenda of Uganda is shaped by its Comprehensive National Development Policy Framework (CNDPF) referred to as Vision 2040. Vision 2040 is a long-term strategy, outlining the country's goals over 30 years through three 10-year plans, and six 5-year plans (National Development Plans). The overarching goal is to transform Uganda from "a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years," (National Planning Authority, 2013, p. 4). In its context-setting, Vision 2040 identifies past growth constraints as low competitiveness, weak public institutions, unclear ideology, lack of industrialisation, corruption, low levels of government investment, outdated infrastructure, inadequate human resources, lack of savings and national revenue, and adverse demographic trends (ibid, pp. 5-7). Identifying these issues as the key obstacles to growth reflects a grounding in neoliberal thinking complemented by elements of a developmental state. Reflecting this, Vision 2040 positions the private sector as "the engine of growth and development" and tasks the government with providing a conducive environment for businesses and foreign trade. The government committed to a "business approach" to governing while also promoting strategic public investment (ibid, p. 16).

Vision 2040's economic priorities confirm the frameworks neoliberal character. The framework prioritises addressing Uganda's low competitiveness, removing barriers to business such as high taxes, deepening the financial market, attracting FDI, and ensuring a low debt-GDP ratio. Underpinning these interventions are the two guiding neoliberal principles of monetary and fiscal prudence. Deregulation is proposed across various sectors and the desire to integrate into global financial markets is clear. The centrality of the private sector is affirmed

in government's commitments to provide compensation for risk-taking businesses facing "externalities" and to implement PPPs in rural areas (ibid, pp. 21-37). Where government is assigned a more active role, it is aligned to the second phase of neoliberalism which is characterised by state intervention aimed at preventing the financialised economy from collapsing under its own weight (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2014, p. 157). This is exemplified by government's commitment to increase public investment in industries that have a comparative advantage, to exploit the oil and gas industries, and to recommend where the private sector should invest. This framework orientates Uganda's economic priorities toward global integration and the accumulation of private wealth with the expectation that neoliberalism will eventually lead to social prosperity through the trickle-down mechanism (Carmody & Owusu, 2016).

The human resource dimension of Vision 2040 individualises economic actors and proposes neoliberal solutions. It identifies Ugandans "negative attitude toward work" as the reason for low productivity and frames unemployed youth as being "a social and economic threat," (National Planning Authority, 2013, p. 26). The Vision calls to maximise the demographic dividend through improving the education system and skills development programmes. There is an explicit call to link Uganda's educational institution with global capitalism by creating partnerships with Western academic institutions and selected training institutions, supporting the export of surplus labour, and inviting MNC's like Shell and Exxon-Mobil to establish research nodes in Uganda's universities (National Planning Authority, 2013, p. 69). This approach combines two neoliberal concepts – the individualisation of economic agents and the deepening integration into the global market.

Vision 2040's sub-frameworks

NDP I, NDP II, NDP III

NDP I (2010 – 2014)

The inaugural Plan under Vision 2040 defined roles for the state and the private sector in accordance with neoliberal visions. It characterised the state as enforcing basic rights and ensuring maximum efficiency of the economy. The latter was to be given effect through government intervention in the forms of advising private sector investment, addressing inequality, providing public goods, and "correcting market failures" (The Republic of Uganda, 2010, p. 64). The Plan explicitly states that "it is Government policy that the private sector will remain the engine of growth, employment creation and prosperity," (ibid, p. 65). Additionally, Uganda would continue to rely on "development partners" and multilateral institutions to finance public spending. These respective roles given to the state, businesses, private capital, and multilateral financial institutions all indicate the adoption of a neoliberal agenda in Vision 2040.

The NDP I's macroeconomic targets were geared towards macroeconomic stability and outward orientation, described as "balancing wealth creation and poverty reduction," (ibid, p. 55). Macroeconomic stability and integration into the global financial system were identified as essential for Ugandan and East African development. The Plan committed to public infrastructure investment and social spending but proposed mobilising domestic resources mainly through increasing the tax base and improving tax administration (ibid). The tax base will be broadened by including the informal and subsistence sectors (ibid, p. 62). Further revenue mobilisation would be sourced through attracting FDI and ODA grants and loans. The social priorities of government are used to justify fiscal prudence as the Plan emphasises that reforming spending was key to ensuring social service delivery. These plans are tied to

governance reforms like standardised accounting practices and improved monitoring. The primary goal of Ugandan monetary policy was inflation control - to aid financialisation and to expand private sector banking (ibid, p. 60). These measures were complemented by extensive private sector deregulation and the explicit promotion of PPPs. The Plan proposed a flexible exchange rate policy that allowed government intervention to deal with volatility. The trade deficit would be funded from remittances, donor aid, and private sector capital. In emphasising the importance of debt sustainability, the Plan stated it would only borrow in order to invest in sectors that could produce exports (ibid, p. 61). These policies of macroeconomic stability, outward orientation, and financialisation form a typical neoliberal agenda.

The NDP I's framing of employment was mostly neoliberal but was tempered by social interventions. The NDP was themed around growth, employment, and socio-economic transformation for prosperity. Uganda had made strides in improving education enrolment but recognised that the education system did not necessarily give students better chances of employability or productivity. To meet these and other goals, it introduced a National Employment Policy (The Republic of Uganda, 2011, p. 5). The policy was concerned with low youth labour force participation levels and tried to address the dual issues of skills and job mismatch and of low enrolment in school. Further, the policy identified that the precarity of employment in Uganda hindered on-the-job training. The Ugandan economy was also marked by a lack of investment and a corresponding low level of employment creation. Some of the constraints identified were that education did not encourage entrepreneurship nor provide Ugandans with skills demanded by the workplace; that entrepreneurship was hindered due to low incomes and savings; that poor health outcomes led to low productivity; that infrastructure was failing; and that technologies and skills were becoming obsolete (The Republic of Uganda, 2010, p. 206). The responsibility for employment creation was assigned to the private sector, and entrepreneurship is seen as a main priority. Some proposed social interventions in the plan are however more reflective of a developmental state, including affirmative action, establishing a minimum wage, and providing greater worker protections (The Republic of Uganda, 2010, p. 208). Thus, the employment policies in the NDP I are founded on neoliberal conceptions of private-led growth and entrepreneurial endeavour, but they are accompanied by limited state intervention.

Despite the failures of previous rounds of neoliberalism, Uganda's NDP I persisted with this framing. Having gone through extensive privatisation of previously state-owned enterprises, the ability of the private sector to generate employment opportunities was fundamental to the NDP. However, the private sector generated employment at a far lower rate than required to absorb the labour force. Further, poverty in Uganda was "characterized by a lack of access to wage employment, low wages for those who do work, and unstable income for the self-employed," (Byamugisha, Shamchiyeva, & Kizu, 2014, p. 1). Of particular concern was the high rate of youth unemployment for females, which exists due to systemic exclusion and lack of opportunities (The Republic of Uganda, 2011, p. 17). Due to this, Uganda sought policy direction through the UN's Work4Youth programme, whose survey found the key issues to be a mismatch between labour force skills and employment demands, youth underemployment, and the poor quality of existing jobs (International Labour Office, 2017, pp. 1-2). A Work4Youth report proposed a macroeconomic policy that emphasised job growth and suggested making education universally accessible, encouraging the completion of school, improving the curriculum with input from industry employers, improving working conditions, and increasing access to finance for young entrepreneurs (Byamugisha, Shamchiyeva, & Kizu, 2014, pp. 46-49). The proposals in the NDP and, to a less extent, the proposals of the

Work4Youth report reflect a continuation of neoliberal policies that Uganda was implementing in the ESAF and PEAP with a minor role of worker protection for the state.

The Second NDP (2015-2019)

The NDP II is an unequivocal commitment to a neoliberal policy framework. The theme of NDP II was "Strengthening Uganda's Competitiveness for Sustainable Wealth Creation, Employment and Inclusive Growth." The macroeconomic framework of the NDP II was informed by Uganda's agreements to the IMF Policy Support Instrument (PSI), targets of the EAC monetary union, and the overall goals of Vision 2040 (The Republic of Uganda, 2015, p. xxiv). The twin economic goals were maintaining macroeconomic stability and investing in infrastructure. The Plan's strategic direction was "to attain middle income status by 2020" through pursuing "a private sector-led, export-oriented, quasi-market approach," (ibid, p. 101). The targets were to be achieved through a variety of means including infrastructure projects targeted at improving the ease of doing business, developing transport infrastructure for trade, and increasing the share of manufactured exports (ibid, p. 102). The Plan stated that government would mobilise funding for infrastructure but would stay committed to macroeconomic stability. The NDP II made an allowance for increased strategic spending but planned to curtail spending by 2020 (its goal was to achieve 50% debt-to-GDP) while its monetary policy is characterised by maintaining core inflation under 5% (ibid, p. 4). Further financing would be external (ibid, p. 139). There is a clear tension here between strict adherence to neoliberal austere fiscal policies and the need to mobilise government spending for growth. This tension is not resolved but is fused together in a highly contradictory manner. These macroeconomic characteristics would be institutionalised through good governance. The NDP II departs strongly from the NDP I by firmly framing the state as an inherently neoliberal one and by explicitly defining the framework as a private sector-led growth strategy.

The industrial and trade policies in the NDP II also reflect a deep renewal of neoliberalism. Industrialisation would be harnessed through beneficiation and agro-processing, government would work with the private sector to develop skills training programmes, the country would maintain export-oriented growth through increased competitiveness, and the use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) would be prioritised (ibid, pp. 103-104). Uganda's export-orientation would be guided by diversifying exports and "exploiting" the regional market. Agro-processing is also explicitly tied to private investment and commercialisation of agriculture. Government investment was justified only to remove barriers to entry for certain industries and would thereafter facilitate the entrance of the private investment. The prioritisation of PPPs is emblematic of this. Further, government investment was dependent on a particular sector's ability to create wealth, create jobs, and improve development indicators (ibid, p. 106). The NDP II thus conditioned state investment on the end goal of facilitating private investment and the generation of private wealth. The trade and industrial policies contained in the NDP II thus narrow the developmental role of the state and expand the jurisdiction of the private sector – configuration vital to neoliberalism.

The NDP II recognises the country's intractable human resource challenges but promotes ineffective responses in order to maintain compliance with neoliberalism. The rate of unemployed youth including discouraged job-seekers and those NEET was high at 78% (ibid, p. 4). The NDP II imposes a development strategy focused on improving school enrolment and retention, increasing educational accessibility for girls, and tailoring curricula and vocational training to labour market demands (ibid, p. 127). The NDP II's employment strategy expected economic growth to spur employment opportunities and particularly emphasised the need for

government to promote labour intensive activities (ibid, p. 149). It estimated that the service sector will create the most jobs once agriculture is modernised. It committed to orienting skills programme to the private sector demands, in order to improve employability. In addition to PPPs, the government and the private sector would jointly train the Ugandan workforce in order to exploit various sectors including minerals, energy, and transport infrastructure. Uganda also committed to leveraging the demographic dividend by promoting innovative thinking and upskilling. These proposals do not define an active role for the state in addressing unemployment and underemployment and rather concedes employment creation to the private sector.

The Third NDP (2020-2024)

Although beyond the period under review in this research report, Uganda is currently implementing its NDP III which aims to attract FDI, to integrate SMEs into the export market, and to transform the agricultural sector into a commercially viable enterprise (National Planning Authority, 2020, p. xxi). Contradictorily, in a bid to increase employment in the industrial sector the Plan proposes import substitution and promoting local manufacturing while retaining its export-orientation. The NDP III recognises the previous bias toward private-driven growth which it cites as the adoption of liberalisation, and pivots toward a more active role for the State and more community involvement (ibid, p. 12). The previous failures of export-orientation and privatisation to address unemployment has resulted in a shift toward more state-oriented policies. Despite this, Uganda does not abandon the ineffective neoliberal impositions but instead integrates contradicting policies into the existing neoliberal framework.

5 Discussion and Findings

5.1 Synthesis of Key Points from Each Country

The information gleaned in the detailed review of each country's unemployment trends and its accompanying policy frameworks provide the basis for comparison and discussion. While each country's context is unique; its policy frameworks proposed and continue to propose a similar approach to the problem of unemployment.

The South African case illustrates an initial disposition for state-led projects, linking the economic goals of the country with the necessity of nation-building after apartheid. Although the RDP was cautious in its macroeconomic approach; it was rooted in the needs of the general population. Chief amongst these needs was employment creation. The warmth toward state-led initiatives and the scale of employment needed combined to create the impetus for an interventionist approach. The state-led project was quickly abandoned in favour of an export oriented, trade liberalisation approach. In Ghana, independence brought similar visions of the state, including public employment and state-led infrastructure development. However, these visions were undermined by rising public debt and the resultant international caution of high debt-to-GDP ratios. The RDP was promptly abandoned and replaced by GEAR, an unequivocal declaration of neoliberalism.

Uganda's independence was followed by intense periods of civil strife and war, with contestation for political power marked by militarisation, conflict, and dictatorship. The country's economic concerns were sidelined during the conflict period, revisited once political stability allowed. The relative stability offered by Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni paved

the way for the government to begin devising development plans. However, once the chaos of war subdued, the economic plight of civilians came to a head. The colonial exploitation of Uganda and the subsequent wars had left behind an ailing economy with very high levels of poverty (Rule, 1987). Museveni's initial rhetoric was one of Ugandan self-reliance and the pre-eminence of a state-determined vision for the country. This rhetoric was quickly replaced when Uganda sought assistance from IFIs – particularly the World Bank and the IMF. Owing to internal pressure and "expert" opinion on the state of the economy, Museveni's government was compelled to seek financial assistance from these institutions. This financial assistance contained extensive conditionalities, setting the terms of the Ugandan economic framework to date.

The imposition of SAPs in both Ghana and Uganda ushered in the enduring macroeconomic foundations of neoliberalism. Under the guise of debt stabilisation, the SAPs imposed widescale economic reforms in recipient countries. These reforms were, by design, neoliberal in character. The SAPs and the subsequent ESAF played critical roles in entrenching neoliberalism into Uganda and Ghana's macroeconomic frameworks, and the proliferation of IFI influence across the developing world normalised neoliberalism as the prevailing logic (Stein, 2012, p. 433). Although not subjected to SAPs, South Africa's GEAR policy represented an embrace of this logic. The IMF and World Bank reinforced fears in Uganda and Ghana of an economic crisis and presented its own policies as solutions. These policies were packaged as politically neutral development agendas and were supported by a slew of international experts. The urgency of economic reform and the fears of socio-economic destabilisation impressed on both of these countries led to the complete adoption of neoliberalism. South Africa was not immune to these pressures – internally and externally. Its initial growth post-transition was criticised as being too slow and it fought hard to become a destination for capital in Africa. With few institutions offering development finance, the IMF and World Bank monopolised financial aid and loan disbursements to developing countries, and through its extensive influence networks, it spread neoliberalism as the only option. Ghana and Uganda both sought IFI loans in order to reduce government debt – a paradox which the IFIs offered no explanation for. Under the guise of concessional financing, neoliberal policies were firmly institutionalised in both countries. Using high public debt as leverage, the IMF and World Bank have created national fears around expansionary fiscal policy and have thus, further entrenched the neoliberal logic of austerity. South Africa's fiscal deficit is currently under similar scrutiny, including from within government and National Treasury.

Similarly, inflationary pressures in Ghana, Uganda, and South Africa were used to justify the monetary policy of inflation targeting using the interest rate mechanism. In South Africa's case, the initial period of modest growth after 1994 was followed by concerns over inflation and exchange rate appreciation. The swift intervention from the international community in this regard represents an intentional undermining of policy sovereignty in all three countries. Since neoliberal dogma is opposed to state intervention, the particular issue of unemployment is addressed through blunt and ineffective microeconomic tinkering. South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda have each proposed various combinations of human development, self-employment, and entrepreneurship to address their respective unemployment crises. These proposals are made despite the acknowledgement by these states that a critical issue is a lack of job creation. The neoliberal frameworks mischaracterise the reasons for unemployment, allowing the structural nature of this problem to go unaddressed. In preserving the neoliberalism of anti-interventionism, the neoliberal states prescribed in the macroeconomic frameworks of each of

these countries are limited to encouraging the private sector to invest in ways that will achieve developmental goals. The primacy of the private sector wains throughout the period under consideration in this research report, but it is continuously viewed as the dominant force of sustainable employment creation. The obedience to inflation targeting and fiscal prudence further retards the state's ability to pursue development. Instead, the role of the state is reduced to regulation and creating the enabling environment for private sector growth. The commitment to supply-side interventions with regards to human development has not yielded the necessary results for employment creation. Despite this, upskilling and training programmes are littered throughout the macroeconomic frameworks studied in this report.

While passing mention is made of the structural nature of unemployment in these countries, there is little attempt at structural solutions. State-led industrialisation is disregarded as being too costly for the fiscus, and the state therefore primarily concerns itself with identifying investment opportunities and then encouraging the private sector to pursue these opportunities. The macroeconomic frameworks do not address the possibility (and likelihood) that some investment is crucial to development but is not necessarily profitable for the private sector. In such cases, there are minimal incentives for private capital to invest in a manner that will realise developmental goals. There are admissions from these states that the private sector views investing in youth as risky, and therefore the policies propose derisking this investment. A derisking strategy is not able to mobilise the levels of private funding needed to address structural unemployment. The Instead of committing to state-led investment in these areas, the macroeconomic frameworks propose PPPs. The limited role of the state in this regard is attributed to a lack of finances, but progressive options for revenue generation are ignored.

There is a distinct lack of progressive taxation measures, and each country has, at different times, proposed increasing general taxation to raise revenue. Further, the effectiveness of PPPs is assumed and not evidenced, as the private sector is framed as the custodian of efficiency. Although each country links its economic growth objectives to reducing poverty and unemployment, the content of the frameworks shows a prioritisation of global integration over these goals. The export-led growth model is extensively promoted, despite previous failings and inefficiencies. Each country's current macroeconomic framework commits to outward orientation on the basis of comparative advantage. This is purported despite acknowledgement that the benefits of export-led growth have largely been captured by now established economies. In a substantive move away from industrialisation for employment, industrial goals are realigned to meet the needs of the global economy. Therefore, the frameworks prioritise industrialisation in sectors with high export potential and then claim that this will result in better employment outcomes. The result of this has been a sustained deindustrialisation of all three economies, with critical infrastructure neglected and industrial needs unmet.

Contemporary implementation of these policies is accompanied by admissions of previous policy failures, including extensive privatisation of state-owned entities. However, these admissions do not result in the abandonment of neoliberalism. Instead, different framings of the same underlying policy assumptions are presented and integrated into the existing neoliberal logic. This renders the role of the state as a mediator of the effects of neoliberalism, required to intervene in market failures and distortions. These admissions are also characteristic of the second-phase of neoliberalism – a more relaxed approach built on the same foundation, that acknowledges its own shortcomings but does little to address them. The inequality effects of neoliberalism are key examples of this. Particularly evident in South Africa, but to an extent in Ghana and Uganda as well, neoliberalism is correlated with higher levels of income

inequality. This is an obvious implication of neoliberalism's inability to create decent employment. Instead of addressing the root causes, government frameworks ask citizens to trust that the trickle-down effect will equalise distribution of resources.

Each country's financialisation under neoliberalism has had profound implications for monetary policy and for employment. Financialisation is integral to contemporary neoliberalism, and the integration into the global financial architecture was quickly prioritised by South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda. Despite the integration into the global financial architecture occurring on blatantly unequal terms, the countries boast about the competitiveness of its deep financial markets and its expert targeting of inflation. The use of interest rates to appease holders of capital comes at the direct cost of indebted citizens. Further, the supposed concerns with short-term capital inflows are not restricted with capital controls. While the state claims it has limited resources for development, it makes little attempt to enforce and leverage long-term capital investment, instead priding itself with speculative investment opportunities. The proliferation of financialisation in each country has necessitated the development of the services sector. Subsequently, the three countries are marked by similar employment patterns: the dominance of the agricultural sector as an employer, the decline of the agricultural sector's contribution to GDP, the increase of the service sector's contribution to GDP, and the limited labour absorption properties of the service sector. Despite reiterating the importance of labour-intensity, the macroeconomic frameworks all suggest leveraging the service sector to improve employment outcomes. In some cases, employment in services is explicitly tied to the outsourcing of services. This represents the maintenance of export-led growth, albeit the export emphasised is labour productivity.

In most cases, the rationale for adopting the neoliberal framework has been to bring down public debt. In spite of obediently pursuing these policies the countries abovementioned have struggled to achieve this goal of reducing debt and debt-servicing costs. The neoliberal policies explored above have very little effect on employment creation and are inadequate to address the employment challenges facing each of the 3 countries. This inadequacy is clearly reflected in the lack of solutions offered to youth unemployment in particular. High and/or sustained levels of unemployment is generally concerning, but high and persistent levels of youth unemployment necessitate bold action. The frameworks explored superficially mention taking advantage of the 'demographic dividend' but its insistence on microeconomic interventions renders this unachievable. Youth employment outcomes are constantly attributed to poor quality education, low levels of experience, and bad attitudes. These explanations distort the underlying, structural causes of youth unemployment in the 3 countries. Each economy's inability to create jobs is not taken seriously, and it is assumed that some youth unemployment is explained by lack of information regarding available jobs. The flawed assumptions of the causes of youth unemployment in these cases leads to flawed and blunt solutions. While unemployed youth are characterised as social and economic threats, the overarching concern should be the enduring poverty and poor standards of living linked to sustained youth unemployment.

The effect of neoliberalism in Africa has been the systematic erosion of social welfare and social protection, with a particular disinvestment in public education and healthcare. Poku & Whitman (2018) note the political differences between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa but claim that despite this the existence, implementation, and impact of neoliberalism in both regions have stark similarities. Additionally, subjecting Africa to neoliberalism within the context of its subordinate global position has exposed the continent to international instabilities

and other external crises in the world market. For example, in order to receive IMF and World Bank loans, a debt-ridden Egypt had to commit to reducing its spending which led to the termination of government subsidies for food and water. Food riots ensued and the termination was suspended, but the IMF disbursed more funding to rebuild after the protests. Financial assistance from IFIs would be conditional on establishing pre-approved systems of good governance and decentralisation supposedly for the aims of employment creation and infrastructure development. However, these goals are intricately linked to broader processes of privatisation, deregulation, attracting foreign direct investment and export promotion (Poku & Whitman, 2018, pp. 7-8).

Fine & Saad-Filho (2014) further discuss how democracy and democratic institutions have been instrumentalised by the neoliberal project – used to protect and entrench the financial system institutionally, constitutionally, and culturally in the prevailing logic. This instrumentalisation is seen clearly in Southern Africa's relationship with the Bretton Woods Institutions, with the latter promoting democratic transitions and the strengthening of democratic institutions using pro-poor rhetoric. However, Poku & Whitman (2018, p. 10) point to a more sinister intention – by raising the importance of formalised democratic institutions, popular and communal challenges to neoliberalism are easily side-lined when it comes to policymaking, accepting financial aid, and instituting World Bank recommendations. The role of the decentralised State is thus to preserve the conditions necessary for neoliberal policy implementation, with the rule of law and good governance playing leading roles in this regard. The deep social fractures of colonial and apartheid legacies have made the act of governing in young democracies a contentious job, support for which wanes as government is increasingly seen as corrupt, weak, and vulnerable. The breadth and depth of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa further add to the difficulty. It is within this context that we see calls for widespread privatisation and the rolling back of the State. Further, as these cash-strapped countries try to meet developmental objectives, virtually all external funding is subject to the same neoliberal conditionalities. This is because all holders of finance benefit from the implementation of the neoliberal agenda, thus enshrining a self-sustaining system. The exploitation of a developing country's comparative advantage for export-orientated development is another key policy position of neoliberalism.

The neoliberal logic applied to each of these country's macroeconomic frameworks proposes the same, ineffective policies regardless of context or nuance. Despite key differences between the countries, the macroeconomic frameworks are strikingly similar. The South African macroeconomic framework, for example, neglects to take seriously the redistributive role of the state and therefore will likely lead to the entrenchment of existing racial and gender inequality. Having implemented forms of neoliberalism over multiple economic frameworks, each country's admission that core tenets of neoliberalism have proved ineffective at best or harmful at worst has not led to macroeconomic overhaul. Instead, the conservative character of elites in each country coalesces with the demands of international capital and recommits to the policies that enable the concentrated accumulation of wealth. Internal contradictions are found in each macroeconomic framework, including simultaneous import-substitution and export-orientation, but are explained away or ignored. The urgency of unemployment and poverty in each of these countries is undermined by the respective submission to neoliberal policies. The reliance on the dysfunctional trickle-down mechanism persists, despite evidence debunking its effectiveness. The glaring chasm between what each country requires and what neoliberal policy suggests leads one to question why the obedience to neoliberalism remains. The commitment to neoliberal macroeconomic fundamentals is explained by understanding the

political economy of macroeconomic policymaking in these countries. Macroeconomic policies are evidently not developed in order to deliver stated goals of national development, but instead fundamentally reflect the interests of global and domestic elite.

5.2 Answering the Research Questions

Structural youth unemployment in South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda is characterised by the profound inability for the economy to create sufficient jobs. This has particular ramifications for the youth, as the lack of job creation is directly linked to lower labour absorption of young people. Neoliberal policies have been introduced and entrenched in these countries through the overarching macroeconomic policy frameworks adopted. The neoliberal character of these frameworks deems them wholly inadequate with regard to addressing structural youth unemployment. The frameworks are unable to offer any considered strategy that would tackle structural youth unemployment, because they impose an obedience to dogma regardless of context. The importance of mass industrialisation and sustained investment by the state are missing from the policy frameworks adopted. The preference of these policies to issue supply-side solutions results in the proliferation of toothless strategies, including skills development and improving job databases. The resultant effects of strict neoliberalism in these countries is that high youth unemployment remains a concern, and related issues of national unemployment, poverty, and inequality are unabated. Privatisation, export-orientation, and the deepening of financialisation required by a neoliberal framework have had knock-on effects to the detriment of the most vulnerable.

The aversion to state-intervention has resulted in a decapacitated state in all three countries – where the regulatory role is prioritised, and the duty of job creation is outsourced to the private sector. Adhering to the trends surrounding financialisation, these governments have embarked on various derisking initiatives and continue to promote incentives for private sector mobilisation. The dependence on the trickle-down economic model has meant a stunting of standards of living and a postponement of urgent socio-economic needs.

6 Conclusion

This research report has sought to comparatively discuss the structural youth unemployment trends in South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda and the policies which have been introduced to address this. This has required extensive review of literature relating to each country, and a constant linking between unemployment trends and policy proposals. Furthermore, policy influences have been traced and the reasons for particular policy trajectories have been explored. By analysing the neoliberal macroeconomic frameworks that are currently implemented in each country, it has been explicitly pointed out how the issue of structural youth unemployment has been left unaddressed.

While proponents of neoliberalism have insisted on its unique ability to improve employment and socio-economic outcomes, this has not been realised in any of the three countries studied here. The obvious inappropriateness of a neoliberal macroeconomic approach to addressing structural youth unemployment has been ignored by each of the countries. It is clear that these frameworks have not been adopted because of their practical superiority or ability to lead to professed outcomes. Instead, neoliberal macroeconomic frameworks have been adopted due to

prevailing international insistence on neoliberalism and internalised notions of neoliberal supremacy. Despite the inadequacy of these policy frameworks, they are tasked with overcoming the significant barrier of structural youth unemployment. The inability of these frameworks to offer real progress towards achieving this goal is worrisome and poses substantial risks to each country. The structural components of unemployment namely skills, regional, industrial, and demographic are left intact by using a blunt neoliberal approach. This research report thus concludes that the neoliberal macroeconomic frameworks have been unable to address the high structural youth unemployment in South Africa, Ghana, and Uganda; and that adherence to these frameworks serves the interests of global capital to the detriment of the citizens of these countries.

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