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STRATEGIC GAP ANALYSIS OF POLICIES SEEKING TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NAMIBIA: THE NIEIS

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2018

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STRATEGIC GAP ANALYSIS OF POLICIES SEEKING TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NAMIBIA: THE NIEIS

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AUGUST 2018

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in 25% fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Social Security)

Abstract

Youth unemployment is a harsh, everyday reality experienced by at least every one in three young people in Namibia, aged 15 to 34. Namibia inherited a high unemployment rate and a low skills base at independence in 1990. It has since introduced instruments to reduce unemployment. However, almost three decades later, youth unemployment remains high and keeps rising. This research investigates strategic gaps in policies Namibia employs to address youth unemployment. It uses the Namibia Integrated Employment Information System (NIEIS) as a lens through which to see the bigger unemployment challenge. Focused groups of unemployed youths from Windhoek, registered on the NIEIS, are used to gain a deeper understanding of how they experience unemployment, how it effects them and what coping strategies they use. The study suggests what needs to be in place to mitigate the impact of unemployment and what needs to be done to proactively addressing it. Results show that the type of unemployment Namibia experiences is predominantly structural in nature. The study also points to a disconnect between the unemployment type experienced and the strategies used to address it, and suggests this to be one of the key reasons unemployment remains untamed. Of particular importance is how unemployment disproportionately affects job-seekers with poor qualifications, a low skills set and a weak social capital more. Furthermore, results indicate that job search assistance, education and skills development, micro-finance, public works and employment schemes are among the strategies used to address unemployment in Namibia. Ironically, these strategies struggle to reduce unemployment due to conceptual and delivery deficiencies. This is particularly true, considering the disconnect between labour demand and supply. One of the recommendations the study makes is that modernizing and popularizing the subsistence agricultural sector could hold the key to the creation of rural decent jobs and self-employment opportunities.

Keywords: youth, unemployment, job matching, social protection, labour market, active labour market policies, NIEIS, Namibia

Declaration

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Social Security) in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Olga Katjiuongua

August 2018

Dedication

I dedicate this piece of research to my mom, an uneducated widow, mother of seven, who through trying moments had a kind of faith I have never seen before. She always saw beyond her lack of resources. Her sacrificial love, hard work and soft whispers to me made me a natural leader when at the age of 14, she appointed me to the role of her husband and the father of her children. This helped me get to where I am today. May the Lord pour His blessings on her! Loads of love.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to:

My Father in heaven, for being my guide through life and for opening and closing doors as and when He deems fit.

My employer, for the financial support, and the privilege to participate in this course. To Ms. Ingrid Keis and team, thank you for the administrative support.

My family and dear friend Meisie Tjizoo, for the motivation to complete the course and support during my absence from home while attending classes.

To my supervisor, Prof. Alex Van Den Heever, for his guidance and believing in me even when I felt hopeless.

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1 Introduction

Labour markets have become dynamic, in synch with the changing pace of economies. Young persons (under the age of 35), have a competitive advantage as they are more agile and can adjust to change better because of their age and possess tremendous transformative potential (Girard, 2017). However, many a youth is removed from the labour market (du Doit, 2003; ILO, 2016; NSA, 2017). This denies them an opportunity to develop and use their skills, grow their wealth and take up leadership positions as and when senior employees exit the labour market or as these positions become available, which are some of the benefits of employment advanced by Jahoda (Creed & Bartrum, 2006). Often, the problem of youth unemployment is attributed to the development and implementation of policies that do not address the actual problem being experienced (Mwinga, 2012). Thus, the determinants of unemployment require a thorough analysis of employment policies developed are to combat unemployment (du Doit, 2003).

Although the Namibian youth makes up the bulk of the people who are either unemployed or employed in the informal economy, the state has not yet adopted policies aimed at according unemployed persons in general the required social benefits and amenities as enshrined in the Constitution. Social security is not an explicit constitutional right and so is employment (ILO, 2014c; Namupala, 2016; The Republic of Namibia, 1990).

In Namibia, the National Employment Services Act establishes the Public Employment Service (PES) and Employment Service Bureau (ESB) to render professional labour market services for the purpose of achieving full, productive and decent employment. The Bureau renders a number of employment services and operates a web-based system which matches job-seekers with employers. The system is known as the Namibia Integrated Employment System (NIEIS). The NIEIS is one of the newest government instruments with an explicit objective to reduce unemployment. It is a national level labour market information system that aims to match job-seekers with available job openings, to the extent that such vacancies are advertised on the system (Ministry of Labour 2010, 2011). Whilst the NIEIS does not specifically target the youth, the majority of the job-

seekers registered on this system are below the age of 35, which puts the system up for analysis for its efficacy in addressing youth unemployment in the country.

Inter alia, the Bureau registers job-seekers and vacancies, profiles and matches them with listed vacancies and recommends job-seekers for and helps them find suitable employment, provide vocational and career guidance, career and labour market information to job-seekers and other interested persons. It also collaborates with other stakeholders on vocational attachments and internship, and maintains the NIEIS. The NIEIS should maintain up-to-date information on job-seekers, vacancies, training opportunities, specialized skills and qualifications of Namibians and non-Namibians, as well as employers in Namibia.

The Employment Services Act (ESA) places an obligation on designated employers (i.e. those who employ more than 25 people) to notify the Bureau of any and all vacancies or new positions in its employment establishment after which the Bureau profiles and matches the vacancies with job-seekers and advises employers accordingly. A suitably qualified job seeker drawn from the NIEIS and referred to the employer has the first right of employment or the employer will face a penalty (ILO, 2017). While the Namibian government has for almost three decades introduced measures to draw more of the youth into employment, this research seeks to use the NIEIS to gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental reasons that keep the youth removed from the labour market.

This research broadly describes how the NIEIS works. It brings to the fore its underlying principles, assesses its effectiveness and identifies as well as discusses its shortcomings at a strategic level. Albeit to a limited extent, the study also discusses operational level shortcomings. The research uses the NIEIS as a lens through which to view youth unemployment and the challenges the youth face in accessing employment opportunities. It also discusses strategic gaps in the country's approach towards addressing youth unemployment in general, in comparison with good practice gleaned from other settings.

Background

In 1990, right at the end of the colonial regime, Namibia experienced economic growth of nearly 3%, propelled by a strong increase in fishing activities. Inflation stood at 10% and unemployment at 30%. This is in contrast with -0.6% growth the previous year, in 1989.

In 2000, 65% of the population lived in rural areas (Ministry of Labour, 2001) while in 2014 this dropped to 53% (NSA, 2015a), relying on subsistence agriculture as was the case in 1990 (BoN, 1991; 1992). The agricultural sector still has the dual character it had then – commercial farming is more productive than communal farming, but employs less people than the latter as a result of mechanization. The total labour force in Namibia was estimated at 550 000 in 1990 (BoN, 1991), which increased to 1,026,268 in 2016 (NSA, 2017), and one remains eager to juxtapose these figures with the number of job openings in the country. It was estimated that in 1990, 43% of the labour force was employed formally, mostly by government, with the rest informally employed or not employed. The size of the unemployed population at the time was estimated at 30%, mostly unskilled persons, although statistical data at the time was weak and the methodology used to account for unemployment might be different from what is currently in use. The latest statistics indicate that 47% of the labour force is employed informally, and that the unemployment rate is 27.1% (BoN, 1991;1992; NSA, 2015a).

In 1990, it was estimated that the labour force would grow by 3% annually, necessitating the creation of 15,000 jobs each year, although only 4,500 jobs were created in 1991. Currently, there is a need to create new jobs for the 349,383 unemployed persons of which 246,262 are the youth (NSA, 2017). This makes unemployment a difficult challenge to address. Prior to 1990, the rise in unemployment was attributed to either negative growth or stagnation of the economy and later on to a large number of laid off freedom fighters and repatriated exiled Namibians (BoN, 1991). At the moment, the economy experiences some growth which however does not translate into job creation (BoN, 2017).

It was already known by 1990 that rapid employment creation would come from the expansion of sectors such as manufacturing, boosting the informal economy (BoN, 1991) subsistence agriculture, fishing or manufacturing; and not from the already large public service, the capital-intensive commercial agricultural sector or mining and tourism sectors (NPC, 1994a) (though tourism has proven otherwise). It is important to mention that at that time, there were conflicting views with regard to the informal sector. The Central Bank was of the view that if the informal sector is boosted, rapid job growth will be realized, while government was in favour of rapid job growth inside the formal labour force in order to dampen growth in the informal sector (BoN, 1992; NPC, 1994a).

Since 1990, the drive to tackle high unemployment commenced. The intention was to tackle unemployment as a whole, as it affected the majority of Namibians who suffered injustice at the hands of the colonial regime and the conversation about youth unemployment would only start in latter years, despite the fact that at that time, 50% of the population was below the age of 21 (BoN, 1992).

The mandate to promote employment creation in Namibia was recently assigned to the Ministry of Labour (Harambee Prosperity Plan (hereafter referred to as HPP), 2016) although there are other sections of the state which implement a number of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) which directly or indirectly address unemployment. With regard to the youth, the Ministry of Youth and its associated structures have several programmes for employment creation and entrepreneurship. Evidently, the combined efforts of these entities have not yet succeeded in having a positive impact on youth unemployment as it continues to be high and rising. General unemployment rose from 28% in 2014 and 34% in 2016, and youth unemployment from 39% in 2014 to 43.4% in 2016 (NSA, 2015a; 2017).

Namibia is on a fast growth and industrialization trajectory, and the need to harness the demographic opportunities cannot be overemphasized. There is a growing number of child-headed households (Mwinga, 2012; HPP, 2016; UNICEF, 2017) which makes it more important for the youth to be gainfully employed. The ramifications of having a high

youth unemployment rate are well documented, ranging from high suicide incidences, psychological and medical problems, substance abuse, crime to risky sexual activities, vandalism of public facilities, and social unrest (Coenjaerts et al., 2009; Young, 2012).

The current day youth, compared to preceding generations, is more adaptable when it comes to dealing with technological advancements and adjusting to labour market changes. They are considered to have better communication skills, an ability to learn quickly and to be more flexible (Hofman & Steijn, 2003). Allowing them to remain unproductive is detrimental to the individual, businesses, society, and the country (ILO, 2013; NPC, 2008). The majority of these young job-seekers are school drop-outs and persons without a post-high school qualification (NSA, 2015a). Ironically, statistics from African countries suggest higher youth unemployment rates among the educated than the less or uneducated as the latter tend to settle for low wage and precarious employment (Baah-Boateng, 2013; du Doit, 2003). The lack of a focused and targeted approach to the fight against youth unemployment will make the youth more vulnerable and despondent and could lead to unstable homes and fuel intergenerational poverty. Scarce job opportunities and limited entrepreneurship support give the youth a bleak future. Unemployment also is a threat to peace and security (Namupala, 2016; OECD, 2009) as was demonstrated through occurrences such as the Arab Spring.

Problem statement

Namibia is investing an enormous amount of time, energy, funds and other resources to reduce the rate of youth unemployment. These efforts may have yielded positive labour market outcomes for some Namibians, especially during the difficult period of transitioning from the colonial regime. However, the youth of today remains on the periphery of the labour market, as evidence by the high youth unemployment rate.

A programme to redress past imbalances was embarked on and Namibians now occupy positions of influence in government and its organs, which they could not by 1990 (NPC, 1994a). Study opportunities became more accessible to the locals and enabled the

country to produce more graduates than in the preceding decades. These developments were supposed to make employees more productive in order to aid growth and create more employment opportunities for those who are not in employment, as well as for new additions to the labour force. In 1992, youth unemployment was declared a crisis and probably the country's most fundamental problem (Diers, 1992) and is undoubtedly still a crisis in 2017 (NSA, 2017). Using the NIEIS as a mirror into the real issues facing the unemployed youth, the results of this research may enlighten policy developers and analysts about policy shortcomings that prevent the youth from accessing the labour market.

Purpose statement

The purpose of this research is to analyse the effectiveness of the NIEIS in its fight against youth unemployment in Namibia.

Research questions

Main question: what is the effect of the NIEIS on youth unemployment in Namibia?

- Sub-question 1: What hinders the effective absorption of the youth into the labour market?
- Sub-question 2: How far can the NIEIS go in improving the youth's ability to access the labour market?
- Sub-question 3: Which linkages with the NIEIS at policy and platform level can improve the youth's ability to access the labour market?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The Namibian Employment Landscape

Almost all the necessary means of a person's livelihood can be accessed with money, from cradle to grave (Bay & Blekesaune, 2002; ILO, 2017; Namupala, 2016). Money can be accessed through a variety of methods and includes running a business, being employed, selling assets and receiving government transfers. To access these methods also requires income. It is argued that not everyone can run a business, or can be an entrepreneur. A method for gaining access to money which can be applicable to the majority of the people is gainful employment (ILO, 2017), although one has to pay to be employed, by way of education and training, which are in many cases the key to employment. In the absence of adequate business opportunities and start-up support, and a limited number of people with business acumen, gainful employment becomes a crucial method of gaining access to the money needed to provide for the needs of the individual and his/her dependents (du Doit, 2003) and offers a route out of poverty (ILO, 2004). Gainful employment is a powerful instrument, which contributes massively towards ending the vicious cycle of poverty (Baah-Boateng, 2013). Employment gives an individual a sense of purpose and belonging, a feeling of mastery as well as the sense of importance attached to earning 'one's living' (Creed & Bartrum, 2006; du Doit, 2003). As Bay and Blekesaune (2002) put it, paid employment not only represents the admission ticket to a number of consumer goods, but it also develops the individual's skills, capabilities and social standing.

Continuous spells of economic downturns and dwindling state funds render contributory social protection schemes more sustainable than social assistance schemes (ILO, 2017). The challenge is that contributory schemes are only accessed by those in employment, particularly formal employment. This supports the contestation that gainful employment is the most valuable asset in the hands of a person living in poverty and an important

route out of poverty (ILO, 2004). Gainful employment gives an employee options and choices. The Namibian government realized from the onset that the only way to sustainably eradicate poverty is through the creation of productive employment opportunities (NPC, 1994a). However, decades after this realization unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular remain huge challenges (ILO, 2014c; Namupala, 2016; NSA, 2015a). To compound the problem, there is also evidence of growing working poverty - one can be employed, but this will not guarantee an exit from poverty (Namupala, 2016; NSA, 2015a).

Governments may have good employment promotion policies, but if they crowd out the youth as is the case in many countries, they may be ineffective as employment capabilities will not be widely developed in the emerging labour force. Such 'crowding out' effects may be realized if vast amounts of experience are demanded by employers of the youth or if skills development is workplace-based and for the benefit of current employees (du Doit, 2003; Larsen, 2003). Employment promotion programmes have to be closely aligned with the actual problem they are addressing (du Doit, 2003). They need to be focused and where possible, targeted (Mwinga, 2012). Judging by the persistently high unemployment rates, one can argue that the generic and fragmented approach to addressing unemployment in Namibia has proven to be ineffective as it is apparently not reaching those in great need of employment, namely the youth and women (NSA, 2015a).

The private sector is the biggest employer in Namibia, employing 42.9% of working people followed by the public sector with 20% of the employees (NSA, 2015). There are concerns that the public service is large and has been growing at the expense of more productive sectors which means that rapid job growth should be stimulated in the more productive sectors and the informal economy (BoN, 1992; Mwinga, 2012; NPC, 1994a). The current reality is that job growth in these sectors is not occurring at the desired pace. Full employment, i.e. an unemployment rate of 5%, is aspired to by 2020, (HPP, 2016). This aspiration is amidst growing private sector concerns that the business climate is not

conducive to investment, growth and job creation (NEF, 2017). It means, unless drastic measures are taken to improve the business climate in Namibia, job growth will not occur.

The pre-independence government made it hard for the majority of the citizens to occupy positions of influence as they were denied access to education. Upper-end positions were predominantly reserved for those who spoke Afrikaans and European languages. The majority of the black population was less educated and resided mostly in rural areas. The country therefore inherited a high unemployment rate of 20.1% (Ministry of Labour, 1994; NPC, 1994a) with a limited skills base. The pathways for those with some education was toward teaching, nursing and in the police force. Those without an education had to make peace with working in manufacturing, construction, private households, on commercial farms, and as contract workers in the mines and the fishing industry - almost half (48%) of the employed persons were engaged in the agriculture sector (Ministry of Labour, 1994).

On the other hand, those who left the country before or just after independence for studies, also had better and wider options and returned home better trained and/or qualified; which enabled them to occupy senior positions in government and private sector (NPC, 1994a). However, at independence, only 1.8% of the total employed persons were university graduates. The rest were illiterate (28%), had vocational or teacher training qualifications (3.8%) or either had primary or junior secondary education. Only a small number had senior secondary education (Ministry of Labour, 1994).

Already after independence, the youth was bearing the brunt of unemployment, with almost a 50% unemployment rate (NPC, 1994a) but graduate unemployment did not manifest itself in Namibia right after independence as unemployment was high among the illiterate and those with primary and junior secondary education (Ministry of Labour, 1994). With the dawn of independence, several reforms took place, career paths were expanded and opportunities created (NPC, 1994a). While positive, these achievements can obfuscate the hardships of the current unemployed youth. These reforms and

achievements might have benefited some but clearly not the current day youth, as they have the highest unemployment rate (ILO, 2017; NSA, 2017).

Through these reforms, programmes such as the National Vocational Training System, Labour Market Information System, the Development Fund, and the Employment Promotion Fund, to mention a few, were introduced to reduce the school dropout and repeat rates, improve literacy levels, ease access to tertiary education in all fields of study and develop technical skills at non-academic training centres, as well as transition people into the labour market (Diers, 1992; Ministry of Labour, 1994; NPC, 1994a;). However, technical subjects were gradually removed from the school curriculum in favour of academic subjects. This would naturally increase the school dropout rates and was thus counter-productive because not every learner is academically inclined. A limited number of schools were left to offer vocational subjects as their core teaching, with the aim to re-integrate some learners into the mainstream of education. However, this does not go without stigmatization for these learners. Through the most recent re-reforms, technical subjects are expected to find their way back into the school curriculum. The national apprenticeship programme was also abolished after independence (ILO, 2017) which would fuel skills mismatch. The private sector, realizing this bottleneck, is currently working on re-introducing this measure (NEF, 2018)

Urbanization and Unemployment

Although in the past, rural area employment was for those with low levels of education and the unskilled (Ministry of Labour, 1994), rapid urbanization has taken place, which reduced the size of rural residents from 73% in 1991 to 52% in 2014 (BoN, 1992; NSA, 2015a). There is therefore a large number of unskilled job-seekers in the metropolitan areas as well, although the unemployed youth is predominantly (51.4%) in rural areas (NSA, 2017).

This mass movement of people is propelled by an expectation to improve people's living conditions through better job prospects and lucrative business activities. Often, these

expectations are not met as labour supply in metropolitan areas outstrip demand – as reflected by the unemployment rates (Mwinga, 2012; NSA, 2017). Despite these developments, rural areas remain a strong sponge that absorbs the rest of the young persons with very limited options to change life for themselves. Rural areas house 51% of the unemployed youth, of which 60% are females (NSA, 2017). This forces some of them into informal employment, subsistence employment and low productivity farming activities; or reliance on the social grants of pensioners (Mwinga, 2012). Subsistence agriculture remains the biggest rural employer (NSA, 2015a; 2017). The youth that lives in rural areas is characterized by limited access to technology, which makes it hard for them to even access labour market information, for example, through the NIEIS (ILO, 2017). Youth unemployment is therefore a challenge in both rural and urban settings.

Labour Markets

Labour markets are avenues through which labour demand and supply interact in order to allocate labour. They are characterized by workers oscillating between stocks of employment, unemployment as well as into and out of the labour force. ILO (2014d) defines the labour force as a country's working-age population which engages actively in the labour market by working or looking for a job. A key feature of the labour market is the search for a match – on the one hand by employers and on the other hand by the employed and unemployed job-seekers, which process ought to result in the flow of filled vacancies (Van Ours, 1991). Active labour market instruments, such as job matching tools, are important interventions as they focus on the interaction between employers and employees, and their success hinges on an inverse relationship between unemployment and job creation, i.e. unemployment drops as job creation rises. In this relationship, low productivity levels dampen job creation which increases unemployment and vice versa (Hornstein et al., 2005).

Labour markets are far from being perfect (in a neoclassical economic sense). Frictions in the labour market prevent the job seeker and employer from converging in order to secure a match or job placement. These frictions are caused by factors such as

information problems and spatial considerations (i.e. travel distances) which separately or jointly exacerbate the unemployment problem. Targeted interventions are therefore necessary to bring equity into the playing field by assisting the unemployed to access jobs as quickly as possible. This is particularly true for vulnerable groups like the long-term unemployed and those with a weak social capital who would otherwise be excluded from consuming such services (ILO, 2017). Such interventions therefore act as one dimension of a safety net (Burgess, 2003).

Key Labour Market Indicators

It is important to understand the key labour market indicators used in measuring unemployment. The *labour force* is the proportion of the population which is economically active. It is made up of people who are currently employed, as well as those who are unemployed but are actively looking for employment. The *unemployment rate* is the share of the *labour force* that is unemployed, whilst the employment rate is (conversely) the share of the *population* that is employed. The *labour force participation rate* is the labour force as a percentage of the country's population. It is a measure of the willingness of a population to provide time to the labour market. (Fares et al., 2006; ILO, 2014d; NSA, 2017)

Active Labour Market Policies

Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) consist of *employment services, labour market training, entrepreneurship support, employment subsidies* and *public works programmes* which directly employ people (ILO, 2017). They are implemented to reduce structural unemployment because of their positive effect on matching jobs with job-seekers, on productivity and labour mobility (Altavilla & Caroleo, 2006).

The underlying aspiration of many of these ALMPs is that unemployed persons will be permanently reintegrated into the labour market as quickly as possible, enrolled in further education or employability programmes or marshalled into entrepreneurship (Caliendo et al., 2008; Caliendo, et al., 2011).

From literature reviewed, the effect of ALMPs on youth employment varies from 'none' or 'negative' in the United States to 'substantially positive' in some European countries. Employment schemes tend to have more positive effects on employment in comparison with training schemes as the latter is perceived to delay the exit out of unemployment due to locking-in effects (Bolvig, et al., 2003). However, argue that the short-term lock-in effects of training programmes are offset by long-term positive effects of a successful programme, such as the acquisition of skills and entry into the labour market (Caliendo, et al., 2008; Leschke, 2011). In the main, well-designed and executed ALMPs reduce unemployment (Sianesi, 2003).

Job Matching Services

There are often complaints from employers that they struggle to fill vacancies while there are job-seekers who complain about not finding the job they are looking for. It can be inferred that often vacancies and unemployment do co-exist (van Our, 1991). However, the chance of securing a correct match is not always guaranteed, and the process of scrutinizing potential candidates with the hope of securing a match is costly as placement agents have to deal with an enormous amount of heterogeneous job-seekers and loads of imperfect information (Hornstein et al., 2005; ILO, 2017; van Our, 1991). Job-seekers too have to invest time and money to find a job, which places a burden on an already unemployed person (ILO, 2017). Thus, being unemployed and without social protection places job-seekers at a great disadvantage (Namupala, 2016).

The high youth unemployment rate is a clear sign of the barriers the youth faces in entering the labour market (Fares et al., 2006). While job-seekers with low levels of education can only access unskilled jobs, those with higher levels of education have a distinct advantage as they can perform both skilled and unskilled jobs. This can result in them being over-qualified and possibly under-employed, high quit rates and could crowd-out job-seekers with lower levels of education (Dolado, et al., 2003; ILO, 2017). The youth feel the impact of this situation due to their low skill levels. In the absence of income support for unemployed job-seekers, through the provision of consumption insurance and

which gives job-seekers the opportunity and time to look for appropriate jobs (OECD, 2009; Wunsch, 2009), it may be difficult to alter this situation. Baah-Boateng (2013) suggests that during periods of limited job opportunities, job-seekers would tend to seek any job, lest they remain unemployed. Social protection schemes are therefore seen as important to allow job-seekers the space to hunt for a suitable job as opposed to settling for the first job that becomes available (OECD, 2009).

Based on past progress reviews of government interventions, the weakest link in employment promotion is the labour market information system which seeks to link job-seekers with employers through job matching. Government introduced an element of this through the NIEIS and its main objective is to reduce unemployment. The NIEIS is a (web-based) computer-based system which gives job-seekers an opportunity to upload their profiles and credentials, while the employers are obliged to upload job openings on the system. This is in line with international practices (Burgess, 2003). The employment officers then, using the system, profile and match job-seekers with job openings, and make recommendations to the employers. The employers have to have valid reasons not to employ from the list of recommended candidates provided by the NIEIS. At the same time employers can search for suitable employees, though through the NIEIS officials; and employees can also search for suitable vacancies (Ministry of Labour, 2010; Office of the Prime Minister, 2011; ILO, 2017). A comprehensive labour market information system is also being developed (ILO, 2017).

The NIEIS was piloted in 2012 and introduced in 2014. Although applications can be received at all offices country-wide, the electronic system is not widely embraced by all offices. Since its official roll out, the NIES managed to register over 70,000 job-seekers. Of these, at least 5,000 were aided to find employment; although only a little over 1,000 found employment through the electronic system. The manual system of job matching remains in operation and the figures are not calibrated timely. During the same period, around 5,900 job openings were registered on the system. (Ministry of Labour, 2017), Employers do not always register vacancies and government as an employer does not

declare its own vacancies. Job-seekers who found employment through other means do not update their employment status (ILO, 2017). It is argued that public employment officers are at times sluggish and match incorrectly (van Ours, 1991). This is because not all employers register vacancies on the NIEIS and the full stock of vacancies and vacancy durations in Namibia are not known and thus remain unpublished (ILO, 2017). Therefore, the analysis of labour demand through the NIEIS cannot be generalized to the entire population due to the small size of employers using the system. The ILO (2017) advises the NIEIS to craft a strong value proposition to increase the use of the system by both employers and job-seekers, as opposed to merely enforcing compliance.

It would have been better if there was information to establish the shortest, longest and median vacancy durations to assist in detecting long-term unemployment, which would be important to monitor and manage because it has a negative impact on job-seekers' profiles as employers are more inclined to contract those with recent work experience (Petrongolo and Pissarides, 2000). Unemployment durations above 365 days are regarded as long-term unemployment (ILO, 2014). Even so, these durations do not provide a true reflection as the NIEIS does not have accurate statistics on active job-seekers and at times the status of job-seekers status oscillate between unemployment and employment (ILO, 2017).

Trading in the labour market is costly and takes time due to inherent factors which disrupt the ability to form employment relationships. Such factors include unequal access to labour market information and the heterogeneity of firms and job-seekers (Hornstein et al., 2005). When the effectiveness of the NIEIS is assessed, one is essentially assessing its vacancy-unemployment matching effectiveness. It is important that the NIEIS offers a valuable service to justify its introduction and encourage participation (ILO, 2017).

What makes the matching process challenging is that several studies confirm that informal job search methods (through friends and family) are the most effective ones as they yield more matches (Addison & Portugal, 2001). While van Our (1991) agrees with this, he argues that informal methods are only effective for employed job-seekers and the

employment offices still remain effective for unemployed job-seekers. It is also apparent that employed job- seekers have a better chance to get a job compared to unemployed persons as their work experience is recent (Petrongolo and Pissarides, 2000; van Our, 1991). This has a negative effect on unemployment, as the key goal of a labour market matching intervention is to reduce unemployment. Nonetheless, Gregg and Wadsworth (1996) posit that labour market matching processes are most beneficial to low-skilled job-seekers and the long-term unemployed who have little chance to exit unemployment.

If the NIEIS succeeds in registering every vacancy that exists as well as labour market inflows and outflows instantaneously, the system will have real-time data on the number of jobs in the country as well as the unemployment situation. Currently such data is derived from household surveys, which are at best conducted biennially (NSA, 2017). Effectiveness at this operational level seems to require a mix of platforms that combine to deliver more positive labour market outcomes, which to a limited extent, this research investigated.

Either, there is a dearth of literature on job-search assistance and matching interventions in Africa, or such interventions are not in place. Baah-Boateng (2013) laments the lack of effective labour market information systems in most African countries, as it denies job-seekers and employers access to information about available jobs and skills, leading to an increase in frictional unemployment. However, such interventions are widespread in developed countries (ILO, 2017) and their effectiveness is widely contested. Arguments in favour of job-search and matching assistance maintain that this service is crucial as it counters asymmetric information especially for vulnerable groups and acts as a safety net in the absence of unemployment benefits (Burgess, 2003). Equally strong counter voices are that job-search and matching assistance lead to ‘dead weight’ (Orszag & Snower, 1999) if offered in the absence of ALMP as it turns to transition job-seekers who would find employment even without the intervention.

Social Capital and Employment Prospects

Social capital in this context refers to the accumulation of a person's social connections which makes possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible. It is built on close ties through family, community and religious affiliation. These associations are used to build social relations which are later used to achieve certain ends, including to facilitate entry into the labour market. Social capital exists in the relations among persons and thrives on trust (Coleman, 1988). It is made up of the social relationship that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and the amount and quality of those resources (Portes, 1998). However, this paper neither argues in favour of nor does it negate the importance of social capital, as social capital has its good and bad sides which warrant further analysis.

Seemingly, social capital is important to accessing employment (Baah-Boateng, 2015). Those with weak social capital are expected to face the greatest barriers when accessing employment (Baah-Boateng, 2013). While aiming to bridge the information gap between the employer and job-seeker, the NIEIS also aims to play the further crucial role of levelling the playing field to allow those from weak social backgrounds to compete equally with their contemporaries from stronger backgrounds (ILO, 2017), at least to the extent that the employment officers would remain impartial.

Social Protection and Job-seekers

There are two possible social protection schemes at the disposal of unemployed persons which are provided for by international legal instruments (ILO, 1952; 2012).

- Unemployment insurance is a contributory scheme which benefits unemployed persons who were employed before and contributed to the scheme.
- An unemployment benefits scheme is a non-contributory general tax-funded scheme which benefits unemployed persons who meet the requirements of the scheme.

Although Namibia has a relatively robust system of social protection, it has neither of these schemes (ILO, 2014c; 2017; Namupala, 2016) despite the constitution making provision for the latter (The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, 1990). Thus, job-search efforts of job-seekers on the NIEIS are privately financed, although the subsidized services offered by the Bureau act as a limited safety net (Burgess, 2003).

Unemployment insurance or unemployment benefits will not on their own have a significant impact on unemployment as these are only passive labour market policies (ILO, 2017). However, they do provide a shield against poverty, and finance the job-search efforts of the beneficiaries. It is the combination of active and passive labour market policies which yields better labour market outcomes, provided they were correctly conceptualized and effectively implemented (ILO, 2017). Such an integrated strategy can reduce the duration of unemployment and increase job-search intensity on the one hand, and bridge the labour demand and supply gap as well as reduce long-term unemployment on the other (Altavilla & Caroleo, 2006).

Unemployed and without Social Protection

Unemployment fuels poverty, which shakes the fundamental ideals which social protection seeks to address. The lack of a social protection scheme that targets unemployed persons exacerbates the problem further in Namibia (Namupala, 2016; ILO, 2017).

The absence of social protection schemes that target unemployed persons in Namibia, just like other schemes, is attributed to limited fiscal space and persistent economic hardships. Stiglitz (2009) however argues that economic downturns should instead be responded to with increased spending on social protection and unemployment schemes to get the economy back on a growth trajectory. He argues that this has the dual effect of protecting economic demand while also protecting individuals and families from hardship.

Ifeoma (2016), by way of contrast, argues that the greater the financial hardship for job-seekers without social protection, the greater should be the zeal to find a job. Therefore,

in the case of Namibia where there is an absence of social protection schemes for unemployed persons, one would expect jobseekers to be vigorous in seeking employment. The accuracy of this position is however contradicted by the evidence – i.e. the stubbornly high rates of unemployment.

In her research on job-seeking behavior of unemployed youth in Nigeria, Ifeoma (2016) argues in favour of the social support to be given to job-seekers by employment offices to ameliorate the hardships associated with being unemployed. This is because her research found that the perceived support from friends and family positively influence the job-seekers' job-search behavior. This takes into account that reality that looking for and finding a job is hard, irrespective of the state of the economy.

2.2 Employment Promotion Interventions in Namibia

Job Matching

There are mixed views about Namibia's interventions to reduce youth unemployment which are argued to yield both good and bad results. This begs the question of why government believes the NIEIS will have a positive impact on unemployment. In a comprehensive evaluation of the Public Employment Service (PES) the ILO (2017) supports the services of NIEIS but highlights numerous shortcomings which impede its effectiveness. Worth noting is that ALMPs are not part of the PES, which will affect the matching process and its ability to reduce unemployment. The Namibian unemployment problem is officially regarded as structural in nature (Mwinga, 2012) which implies that it would be difficult for segments of the youth population to transition from school to work (Caliendo et al., 2008). This can in turn lead to long-term unemployment, which can have a 'scarring effect' on labour market outcomes for the affected youth as they start their career worse off than their peers - at lower wages and take longer to improve their earnings and establish themselves socially (Caliendo et al., 2011; Gregg & Tominey, 2004).

In the absence of well thought through and targeted ALMPs or strong linkages with ALMPs provided by other players, the NIEIS can at best only address frictional unemployment and not structural unemployment (Burgess, 2003; Caliendo et al., 2008). This presents a major gap in the policy framework aimed at reducing unemployment in the country as there is a plethora of evidence that positive labour market outcomes are only achieved through a combination of job search assistance, labour market training and other ALMPs (Wunsch, 2009).

Training and Education

Training and education improves human capabilities but does not naturally lead to employment if jobs do not exist (Diers, 1992). It can also be argued that training and education should only be done together with policies directed at enhancing labour demand (ILO, 2017). It is argued that without effective, strong supply and demand linkages, even the best employment promotion intervention will fail. Practical skills training will be in vain if not accompanied by self-employment support such as access to tools and capital and ongoing technical backstopping. The youth are also regarded as powerful “machines” of job creation and should get the necessary support to venture into entrepreneurship (Diers, 1992).

Work Integrated Learning

One intervention that holds the key to employment are apprenticeships (Diers, 1992; ILO, 2017). Apprenticeships are a mechanism through which trainees get out of classroom training to get practical experience in a real life scenario. In Namibia, the concept of apprenticeships was abolished after independence and is thus not widely adopted (ILO, 2017). There are however pockets of occupational interventions and nascent attempts by government owned entities (the Namibian Newspaper, 2017a, 2017b; NTA, 2017). Worth noting and perhaps learning from, is the German education system, which owes its positive labour market outcomes to its linkages to the world of work through apprenticeships, which aid school-to-work transition. As a result of this extensive dual

education system Germany is considered a role-model of youth labor market integration (Caliendo et al., 2008).

Sense of Urgency

Conversations about challenges that inhibit job growth are similar to those the country had right after independence which signals a lack of progress (Diers, 1992). These issues range from the presence of too many training institutions which produce skills not needed by the labour market, poor coordination among labour market institutions, planning for the youth without the youth, (Diers, 1992; ILO, 2017). The Employment Creation Act proposed right after independence is still not promulgated although it is in Bill format, and this supports the argument of Diers (1992) that the country lacks a sense of urgency.

The proposed Youth Employment (Job) Centre to link jobless people and casual work, and get the youth off the streets (Diers, 1992) never took off, although a variation of this is running under the banner of “Men of the Site of the Road’ (MSR), a non-state entity. There is a fresh recommendation to incorporate this under the NIEIS (ILO, 2017). The compilation of a youth jobs register aimed at promoting the youth for permanent and casual work in the current day NIEIS became operational only in 2014. At a youth employment strategies conference in 1992, the youth indicated that they are running out of patience and want jobs and not promises (Diers, 1992). Now with the benefit of hindsight, it can be stated that the situation in which the current day youth find themselves does not differ meaningfully from that of the youth who attended this conference in 1992.

The Youth and the Importance of Employment

Young people are an asset to any nation because of their high energy levels and long term vision for the future. They are adjustable to change and can reach heights which the older contemporaries cannot. This makes them critical ingredients in the process of socio-economic development. In the same vein, the youth can hinder progress if this energy is not properly utilized (Ministry of Youth and Culture, 1993a; Namupala, 2016).

The National Youth Policy introduced in 1993 cemented the youth's right to access opportunities for education, training and employment, in accordance with the Constitution (Ministry of Youth and Culture, 1993a). However, the state of youth unemployment is a clear sign that this right is either not known or it is not forcefully exercised. The assumption of the 1993 National Youth Policy was that the acquisition of skills would lead to employment as it tasks the youth to participate in national development by acquiring skills.

It can therefore be argued that soon after independence, the youth could not find employment due to a lack of relevant skills (Ministry of Youth and Culture, 1993a). However, at the moment the youth cannot find work because those who are skilled possess the 'wrong' skills, while others remain unskilled (ILO, 2017; NSA, 2015a).

Understanding the System of Job-seekers' Support

A journey through the operations of the Public Employment Bureau reveal that it is a state agency, established to operate the Public Employment Service (PES). It falls under the Ministry of Labour and is governed by an Employment Services Board which reports to the Minister. Services of a typical employment services office would range from the simple job matching intervention to complex interventions such as counselling, training and work integrated learning (Burgess, 2003). The Namibian PES has yet to offer this intensive assistance (ILO, 2017). However, in addition to job matching, it offers vocational counselling services, although these are by law not linked to the PES (ILO, 2017; Ministry of Labour, 2011). As there is no unemployment-centered social protection scheme in Namibia, none of the job-seekers are conscripted and all use the services voluntarily. However, these subsidized services can act as a safety net (Burgess, 2003).

Upon arrival at the Public Employment Bureau (PEB), job-seekers are given access to the online portals and are assigned interns who assist them with capturing their data on the system and uploading their documents. Thereafter, those with access to technology can receive notifications whenever vacancies come up and they can apply online. Alternatively, they can visit the PEB daily at allocated times to use the online facilities at

no cost. On an ad hoc basis, the PEB officials submit applications on behalf of job-seekers, especially those without access to technology. One is immersed directly into the search activity upon completion of the online profile, without any assessment of the job-seekers' social needs or vulnerability. This is against the backdrop of the Ministry having qualified counsellors and social workers. The combination of job-search assistance and counselling services especially for the long-term unemployed tend to yield better labour market outcomes (Calmfors, 1994).

There is no system of monitoring the search activities of job-seekers in order to establish their intensity. At best, the services of the Bureau address frictional unemployment, as it neither offers, nor does it cause ALMP to be offered to job-seekers (ILO, 2017). It can therefore not address structural unemployment which requires more intensive and purposive interventions (Burgess, 2003; Caliendo et al., 2008). This is a sign of a gap in the policy environment, considering that this is the Ministry mandated to create employment.

2.3 Cross Country Labour Market Instruments

Germany operates a dual-education system, which combines classroom and work integrated learning. It is seen as a model for integrating the youth into the labour market. The structure is such that the vocational training programmes capture the youth at every point of dropping out or exiting the general education system, whether at lower, junior or senior secondary education level. Those dropping out at the first level are most likely to fall into unemployment first, or exit the labour force altogether. Hence, there is a preparatory programme that facilitates their entry into vocational training. Transition is managed at two levels – from school to training or education, and from training or education to employment. Germany strongly relies on mostly tax funded ALMPs to fight youth unemployment which also have youth specific measures and which offers counselling, job search assistance and placement to the youth. (Caliendo et al., 2008).

The Swedish labour market policy stands on two legs - an unemployment benefits platform and ALMPs. This mix of interventions is linked and has resulted in low unemployment rates (Sianesi, 2003).

Australia operates a privatized employment services function, called the Job Network. Its services are tendered out, and multiple players get contracted to render selected services. The implementation modality is referred to as the Purchaser-Provider Model (PPM). The Job Network has over the years been the subject of international benchmarking and a number of independent evaluations. Job-seekers are allocated to the providers of employment services who are paid based on performance and in accordance with the type of service provided. Such services are determined in line with the pre-assessed needs of the job-seeker. Through this coordinated arrangement, government purchases employment services from private and not-for profit providers. A public agency called *CentreLink* manages the job-seekers system and allocates services, and job-seekers are the users of the employment services (Burgess, 2003).

As the staff of the Namibian PES do not have the capacity to offer sophisticated services especially to highly qualified job-seekers (ILO, 2017), it could be beneficial to collaborate with private providers on selected services, at a fee.

Countries with low unemployment rates have employment policies made up of both active and passive labour market policies which are integrated, vertically and horizontally. They are anchored on programmes such as unemployment insurance, unemployment assistance schemes and labour market retraining. They also include public sector employment such as relief work, entrepreneurship support, employment subsidies, job creation schemes, work experience schemes, as well as programmes that target specific vulnerable groups, relocation grants and targeted support to employers in job-rich sectors (Caliendo et al., 2011; Sianesi, 2003).

2.4 Causes of Youth Unemployment

Although there are multiple causes of (youth) unemployment, the literature points out that some of the main factors resulting in high youth unemployment includes the absence of jobs, limited skills and experience, the size of the youth cohort, propensity to change jobs (as they are essentially exploring what they want), and imperfect labour market information (Caliendo et al., 2011; Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). Labour markets also malfunction due to the lack of proper human resource development planning and labour market information systems (NPC, 1994a).

It is important to consider the causes of unemployment from both the labour demand and supply angles. From the demand side, it is often argued and expected that economic growth should and would generate additional jobs to absorb the growth in the labour force, which in turn addresses poverty, inequality and exclusion. For many developing countries, the stark reality is that recent economic growth, has yet to yield the expected impacts on poverty and inequality as many people remain unemployed or informally employed (Institute of Development Studies (hereafter referred to as IDS), 2016; Mwinga, 2012).

Employers are skeptical of the ability of first-time employees to apply their skills to real life situations. Knowing too well that money needs to be invested into training these employees, and considering that in the labour force there are enough experienced workers, it becomes difficult to convince them to employ new entrants (Young, 2012). Instead, employers have a general preference to employ highly skilled workers who are more likely to increase the productivity of firms (Burrows, 2009). The level of supervision that goes into grooming first-time employees can be burdensome on supervisors, who have to add this to their existing overhead costs (ILO, 2017).

On their own, the typical employer will not invest in portable skills in fear of losing the return on the skills development investment. This is because portable skills improve employee mobility and young employees inherently move in and out of employment in search of where their passion lies and a job that suits them (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002;

Orszag & Snower, 1999). This paper argues that this reflects a form of market failure which implies that government intervention is required to achieve a dynamic and versatile workforce. This in many countries is attained through active labour market policies and not only cash transfers (Estevez-Abe et al., 1999; Young, 2012).

The second point is the supply of labour. A frequent feature of many labour markets is the mismatch between the skills supplied by employees and those demanded by the employers (Estevão, 2007) caused by inadequate education (Burrows, 2009) or imperfect information (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). While persons in possession of tertiary qualifications have an advantage over those without they are found ill prepared for the world of work because they have not had the chance to prove themselves (Burrows, 2009; NSA, 2015c). Employers are often wary to take the risk of employing young people without a proven employment track record (Young, 2012) and also because of their relatively high rate of turnover (Caliendo et al., 2008).

Without an employment profile and social capital, securing the first job of 'choice and on time' can become an insurmountable hurdle for many young persons, especially those from rural areas and poorer backgrounds and those with low education. This then pushes many of them into informal sector employment, which in many developing countries continues to grow alongside the formal economy, but with less favourable labour conditions and low social protection coverage (Baah-Boateng, 2013; IDS, 2016; ILO, 2017; Mwinga, 2012; Yu, 2013). The problem is compounded by their lack of the much needed soft and work skills, which are best acquired at the workplace. Ironically, these skills are demanded from first time employees. Therefore, the longer they remain outside employment the more irrelevant any skills they may have acquired becomes (Baah-Boateng, 2013; Burrows, 2009; Covizzi, 2008).

Countries both industrialized and developing, seem to agree on the causes of youth unemployment. Recurring frequently is the issue of responses that are not always aligned to the problem they seek to address and the skills mismatch, even in countries with well-functioning education systems (Barbulescu, 2012; ILO, 2017). The absence of a dual

education system, a system which combines classroom teaching with work-based practical sessions, is seen as an impediment to supplying employers with the technical skills needed for growth and transformation because such a hybrid approach facilitates lifelong learning (Barbulescu, 2012; Cruz & Vrecer, 2011). In addition, some argue that the growth of the labour force at a rate that is disproportionate to the growth in employment opportunities is the problem which, in countries such as Namibia, can be attributed to population growth and a reduction in infant mortality rates (Kingdon & Knight, 2007; Mwinga, 2012).

Inflexible labour markets are seen by international financial institutions as a factor that reduces competitiveness and foreign direct investment (African Labour Research Network, 2014; Estevão, 2007) leading to a rise in unemployment. However, African Labour Research Network (2014) cautions against labour market flexibility and deregulation from an African perspective as the absence of strong social protection mechanisms will affect the welfare and livelihoods of workers negatively.

2.5 Effects of Unemployment

Unemployment is a burden on the youth. It leaves them with feelings of frustration, despondence, self-blame and regret. To live, one needs money, and for many, money is generated from employment. (Namupala, 2016)

Job-seekers without the requisite skills and the wherewithal tend to be discouraged by the cost of searching for a job which cost can become astronomical as the unemployment period gets protracted (Kingdon & Knight, 2007; NSA, 2015b). There is a limit to how much the unemployed youth is prepared to spend on looking for a job, and they soon become discouraged as job searches yield no positive results (Dawson, 2014). However, literature suggests that there is a positive relationship between the frequency and intensity of job search behaviours and the chances of labour market (re)integration irrespective of the quality of the job one secures (Lo Presti, 2014).

There is inconclusive and contradictory evidence that social grants prolong the duration of unemployment, which builds a case for a more targeted support mechanism to alleviate the financial burden of looking for a job (Kingdon & Knight, 2007). However, this does not negate the challenge of unintended consequences associated with generous unemployment benefits with no strong linkages to active labour market interventions. Isengard (2003) argues that adequate levels of unemployment benefits afford job-seekers the opportunity not to settle for any available job out of desperation, but to take some time to seek a job that is in line with their academic credentials and employment profiles. Settling for any available job that comes first is one of the factors that contributes to structural deficiencies in the labour market. In support of this standpoint, Neves et al. (2009) single out the state old pension grant as it is perceived as being less susceptible to moral hazards.

Posel et al. (2006 as cited in Kingdon & Knight 2007), argue in favour of a positive correlation between a household that receives a state old age pension and labour market outcomes in that such a grant enables prime-aged persons to migrate in search of employment or entrepreneurship opportunities or use such grant as a springboard to venture into the latter. IDS (2016) reinforces this notion, espousing that such grant finances out-migration for the purpose of looking for a job. Despite opposing views on the effect of social grants on entry into the labour market, there is agreement that poverty creates barriers to job search and (re)employment (Malmberg-Heimonen & Vuori, 2005).

The youth labour market challenges are peculiar and unprecedented. Their lack of job-specific experience and increasing competition makes it particularly hard for them to enter and remain in the labour market (Kingdon & Knight, 2007). Yet the youth of today is relatively more educated than prior generations (Coenjaerts et al., 2009; Girard, 2017). When they do manage to make in-roads into the labour market it is often in non-senior positions and on short-term contracts (Martin, 2009). During economic troughs, they are the first to be let go of, which practice is referred to as Last-In-First-Out, a term borrowed

from the field of Accounting used in inventory management (Coenjaerts et al., 2009; Martin, 2009; OECD, 2009).

While the urban unemployed youth is not necessarily better off, the challenges and needs of the rural youth tend to differ from those in urban settings. The mobility out of poverty and social exclusion is to a great extent determined by the presence of pathways into the labour market (Development Bank of Southern Africa, 2011) and for the rural youth such pathways are nonexistent for those who fail to obtain high school certification (Hajdu et al., 2013) often fueling migration to urban areas. Thus, a blanket approach and response to youth unemployment is not an option. For many developing countries, agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy. There is therefore a case to be built for the commercialization of agriculture and the use of technology to improve productivity and create decent employment to absorb the rural unemployed youth (Coenjaerts et al., 2009).

A qualitative study conducted by Namupala (2016) which sought to understand the coping mechanisms of unemployed youth in two regions of Namibia depicts the youth as being in dire straits - being unemployed and without social protection. One participant was cited saying:

> "*I am tired of my unemployed situation especially because my life is difficult and very bleak or hot as if in the fire. My life is also heavy just like one is carrying a heavy load…I have endured a tough life without a job, I cannot take it any more…*" (Ohangwena region, male aged 27)

While another said:

> "*I feel bad because the pension money for my grandmother which I depend on will not provide all my needs. I have to make sure that my basic needs are not wasted. I survive by sharing my grandmother's pension, with which I buy food and some clothes…*" (Ohangwena Female aged 19 years old).

2.6 Effects of unemployment to the Individual

Unemployment in general, and youth unemployment in particular, is an insidious problem and a lot is written about the effects of unemployment both to the victim and to society as a whole. Viewing (long-term) youth unemployment with a 'community and applied social psychology' lens Bolam and Sixsmith (2002) describe it as a social problem with negative consequences for the societies, communities and individuals that it affects. Individuals who are unemployed are likely to experience lower levels of wellbeing and happiness (Gregg & Tominey, 2004; Kingdon & Knight, 2004) as the absence of an income affects them cognitively, physically and psychologically and it also affects the quality of social relationships leading to family breakdowns (Briar, 1983; Lo Presti, 2014; Tjikune, 2012). Those in employment, particularly the ones with better educational attainment, often approach unemployed persons with disdain, blaming them for their own fate (Briar, 1983; Lewis et al., 1987).

As labour market entrance is prolonged, the long-term unemployed persons ultimately start their career worse off than their peers. Weaker credentials often mean lower wages, longer periods to improve their earnings (referred to as wage scarring) and lower confidence to tackle challenging work assignments. When a young person's entrance into the labour market is prolonged, it erodes his wage earnings by 13% to 21% by the time the person reaches the age of 42 (Gregg & Tominey, 2004). This wage scarring persists for at least 12 years, post-employment (Young, 2012). Experience, soft skills and additional job specific skills are acquired in the world of work, and detachment from the labour market leads to the inability to learn and grow, worsening the potential for employment even more (Gregg & Tominey, 2004). The longer a person is unemployed, the longer that person is likely remain unemployed. If spells of unemployment persist for too long, some of the unemployed persons become detached from society, increasing their exposure to poverty and other adverse experiences, which in turn causes them to be marginalized (Isengard, 2003).

The lack of employment opportunities for the youth also affects other areas of their life. Delayed entry into the labour market means delayed marriage, economic independence and it also delays procreation because of the associated financial obligations. Being unable to attain adulthood and respectability, which come with being employed and/or earning an income and affording the basic things of life such as food and shelter, by default means prolonging 'youthhood' while waiting for an unfulfilled promise. (Dawson, 2014)

Unemployment causes psychological distress because it deprives people of benefits which employed persons regularly enjoy such as having a structure about how one's time is spent which is linked to poor mental health, engaging in social activities, having a shared sense of collective purpose and personal identity (Creed & Bartrum, 2006; Wanberg & Griffiths, 1997; Waters & Moore, 2002).

Schaufeli and VanYperen (1992) suggest that the psychological effects of being unemployed are not the same for everyone. Females and recent graduates are less effected by unemployment than males and people who have worked before. As for recent graduates, the impact is not as strong because they still have to build a corporate profile and establish their identity. For those who have worked before, the impact is relatively greater because of the responsibilities and risks they have taken on over time. It is argued that one's status is often defined by one's job and older workers who become unemployed lose their work related identity (Creed & Bartrum, 2006). For females, traditional roles in the family help moderate the impact of being unemployed. Similarly, Waters and Moore (2002) suggest that young and older persons react to and experience unemployment differently.

2.7 Socio-economic Effects of Unemployment

Absence from the world of work exposes unemployed persons to the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty and social exclusion, as they lack adequate resources to care for and ensure a decent education for their children (Dike, 2009; OECD, 2009). Young

people have aspirations, creativity, and energy which are assets that should not go to waste (OECD, 2009). Countries miss the opportunity to utilize these human resources for their technological and economic transformation as well as the concomitant tax revenue they would have generated, had they been in productive employment (Dike, 2009). In turn, some of the unemployed but energetic persons start to direct their idle time towards unproductive engagements such as substance abuse, criminal behavior, as well as hostility towards foreigners which combine to cause social and political instability (Baah-Boateng, 2013).

The financial and non-financial cost of ill health and a rise in criminal activities are ultimately borne by the state, tax payers and society at large (Gregg & Tominey, 2004; Isengard, 2003). Youth unemployment pushes this segment of the population out of the social safety nets. This then threatens the ability of social protection systems to have an impact across generations and across life-cycles as the number of new mandatory contributors towards social insurance schemes declines (Isengard, 2003).

2.8 The Youth and the Demographic Dividend

For as long as the youth remains unemployed the world will miss an opportunity to benefit from their high energy levels, creativity and innovation. The inability to use the youth productively results in the overall depreciation of human capital. Equally, the youth, society and the state suffer the consequences of increased criminal activities, substance abuse and unrest, increased spending on unemployment benefits and assistance (Baah-Boateng, 2013; Caliendo et al., 2011; Fodderwala, 2017).

2.9 Conclusion

As a result of the heterogeneity of job-seekers, it can be concluded that a stand-alone job-search and matching intervention will not effectively address structural unemployment (Calmfors, 1994; Orszag & Snower, 1999). This means the job-seekers who need help to access the labour market will predominantly be those who would in any case succeed

in the absence of this intervention. Therefore, a comprehensive, integrated approach to aid especially vulnerable job-seekers enter the labour market, is necessary.

It is without doubt that a lot was done since 1990, and that a significant amount of money was used to fight unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular. It is also clear that such investments and efforts have failed to bring down unemployment in Namibia (Mwinga, 2012). This may have arisen due to an incorrect diagnosis of the causes of structural unemployment as manifested in Namibia, which naturally would result in well-meaning but incorrect policies being implemented. The NIEIS on its own may therefore not make a significant dent on youth unemployment because it primarily relies on available skills and vacancies, and does not address key aspects of labour demand and supply.

The PES in Namibia is limited in its approach to addressing unemployment. It neither offers nor does it cause active labour market interventions to be offered. It operates in isolation and the ALMPs landscape remains fragmented and uncoordinated. There are no deliberate measures to collaborate with offices which promote investment and business development, specifically Trade and Industry (ILO, 2017). In the absence of a coordinated, integrated PES, with targeted ALMPs, unemployment in Namibia will remain insurmountable. Bold actions are required to stimulate and incentivize job creation at a grand scale in selected job rich sectors. This should be accompanied by targeted skills development programmes to deliver the exact number and quality of skills needed by those selected sectors.

Across the globe, one of the very important services provided by PES is job matching. This reduces cost and time for both employer and job seeker. A well-functioning intervention of job search assistance results in vacancies being filled more quickly at a low marginal cost, which further leads to more vacancies being opened or an increase in labour demand (Calmfors, 1994). It is also one of the most cost effective ALMPs with proven positive labour market outcomes, all other factors being equal. Some countries

incentivize an early return to work with a bonus under terms, conditions and safeguards against moral hazards and unintended consequences (Martin & Grubb, 2001).

3 Research Methodology

To date, the NIEIS managed to register job-seekers in excess of 70,000 and over 5,900 vacancies. Since the first registration, about 5,000 job-seekers were assisted to find employment.

For the focus group discussions, it was necessary to group job-seekers in accordance with their levels of education. In her investigation of the matching function of heterogeneous job-seekers and vacancies in Finland, Lahtonen (2006) concluded that the level of education of job-seekers affects the matching performance of local labour offices. She found that job-seekers with a primary school education have a positive effect on matches while seekers with secondary education display a negative effect. On the other hand, job-seekers with high school education do not affect matching performance significantly. In the case of the NIEIS, the results indicate that it was easier to successfully match job-seekers with a tertiary education and experience, while those with a without grade 12 were the hardest to match. This could be attributed to the skewed availability of vacancies across the different levels of education and confirms the “dead-weight” argument discussed above (Calmfors, 1994; Orszag & Snower, 1999).

A list of job-seekers registered on the NIEIS was obtained from the Employment Services Bureau. The list contained job-seekers who indicated Windhoek as their residential addresses. Job-seekers were in the age group 15-34, which is the official definition of the youth used in the (Namibian) Labour Force Survey. Excluded from the list are job-seekers who are currently employed as they do not meet the unemployment definition. However, they are covered separately through a questionnaire administered on those who found employment with the assistance of the NIEIS.

Research Strategy

Considering the inability of the formal sector to generate jobs, a selected number of unemployed youth in Botswana were of the opinion that it will be more feasible to address youth unemployment if an organization is setup to lobby and advocate on behalf of the unemployed youth. This is in addition to the minimum wage legislation being enforced, job-sharing schemes being introduced, assisting the youth to access the international labour market, putting skills training programmes in place for the unemployed youth, and promoting job creation and self-employment. These strategies were in response to constraints of limited formal jobs, skewed access to the labour market, difficulties in accessing institutional funding, lack of information on training and employment opportunities and legal constraints (Sechele, 2015).

Similarly, this research offers policy makers an opportunity to listen to the voices of unemployed youth and hear the challenges of being unemployed, and what they perceive to be the solutions to youth unemployment (Bryman, 2014; Sechele, 2015). Having the unemployed youth in focus group discussions is in contrast with the traditional approach of doing research and developing policies for the youth without the voices of the youth. It gives them an opportunity to exercise their right enshrined in the African Youth Charter, that of expressing their ideas and opinions (Sechele, 2015). In the world of business, products are developed with and around the consumers. It cannot be different when it comes to social policy. Therefore, focus group discussions were chosen as a befitting data collection approach for this study.

At the end, the proposed solutions offered by the unemployed youth were compared and contrasted with those of labour market experts and policy developers. This was necessary to see and assess the extent of alignment or the lack thereof.

To allow for a deeper understanding of the chosen system as well as experiences of the unemployed persons, a qualitative research strategy was used. The layered data collection approach entailed face-to-face interviews with state officials, employers, labour

market experts and unemployed persons. Focus group discussions were conducted with the unemployed persons. The use of focus group discussions was important for this study. It allowed unemployed persons to discuss their experiences of being unemployed without support, as well as their perceptions about the job-seekers system and other services rendered by the PES and government in general. This method had its inherent checks and balances as participants argued among themselves and corrected each other. It also allowed for self-reflection on the way one views the topic in comparison with the perspectives of the group.

The researcher was the main instrument for data collection as she facilitated the focus group discussions and interviews. She also administered some of the questionnaires on participants of the focus group discussions upon arrival, though with the assistance of staff members of the Labour Ministry. She also interviewed some job-seekers who found employment through the NIEIS. This gave her firsthand experience of the participants' experiences about being unemployed and perceptions of the system, how they interpret it and what views they ultimately form about the matter. Questions were either open-ended or semi-structured. It is with this in mind that the best-suited design for the study had to be a qualitative research.

The study focused on a heterogeneous group of people with divergent world views and who came with different cultural biases. This called for the study to take on an emergent and evolving approach to accommodate the unraveling of the core issues and adapt processes and questions based on prevailing circumstances. Furthermore, the study unearthed information that would not be accessible through documentation. It gave the researcher, who is also a policy maker, an excellent opportunity to speak with persons whose voices may ordinarily not be heard. Thus, the researcher's contribution to the unemployment discourse henceforth will be from a more practical standpoint.

Unemployed persons are by their very nature both vulnerable and marginalized and adopting a participatory approach is key to making recommendations that could improve their lives. In their assessment of the labour market re-integration of laid-off construction

workers, Killingsworth and Grosskopf (2013) found this approach to also give the research a humanistic character as unemployment affects humans.

Quilgars and Abbott (2000) conducted a study, in which they sought to know the perceptions of employed and unemployed families about their responses to flexible labour markets and the restructuring of welfare programmes. The study used interviews with employed and unemployed persons, as well as focus group discussions, which approach was found to be useful for a qualitative research. As is proposed under this new study, the United Kingdom study also grouped persons in the focus groups based on their common identifiers such their socio-economic background.

Research design

Of the various schemes initiated by government to help reduce unemployment in Namibia, a single case is selected for this research, which is the Integrated Employment Information System driven by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation. The unit of analysis is unemployed person of ages 15-34 who reside in the city of Windhoek, Namibia and who are registered on this system. Thus, the study lends itself to a case study as a research design to allow for a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2012).

Research method and data collection

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

A semi-structured interview guide was employed to solicit responses from selected officials and subject matter experts. Those who managed to secure employment through this system were also included in this study to gather views on how useful the system is and how it could be improved. This information was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire.

Responses from the unemployed persons were gathered through individual interviews aided by a semi-structured questionnaire and also focus group discussions aided by a semi-structured guide. To ensure a free flow of discussions, unemployed persons were encouraged to speak freely and to respect the views of others. They were also encouraged to speak in the language they are most comfortable with and translation was provided. Each focus group was made up of 5-8 persons classified as follows:

- *Group 1*: Unskilled (never employed) without qualifications (Grade 12 or below);
- *Group 2*: Unskilled (never employed) with qualifications (certificate/diploma/degree);
- *Group 3*: Skilled (employed before) with qualifications (certificate/diploma/degree); and
- *Group 4*: Skilled (employed before) without qualifications (Grade 12 or below).

This grouping created a platform that allowed a free flow of information and the exchange of ideas that spoke to the demographics of each group without some group members sitting in awe of those who have attained better things in their lives in terms of education and work experience (Killingsworth & Grosskopf, 2013). It also ensured that participants relate to the experiences of others and are in a better position to amplify or dismiss arguments made by fellow group members. Each session was limited to 90 minutes or 120 minutes at the longest although there was one which went beyond 120 minutes due to the level of interaction and education attainment levels of group members.

As only unemployed persons living in Windhoek were be selected, the researcher made provision to cover transport fares to the Ministry of Labour where the focus group discussions were held. While there was no payment for participation in the study, considering the cost of unemployment, refreshments were placed at the disposal of the participants at the venue as a token of appreciation.

The data collection instrument, i.e. questionnaire and interview guide was discussed with the research assistants who are staff of the Labour Ministry with survey experience.

Some modifications were made. All focus group discussions were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Recordings were backed up daily.

Observation

The researcher observed how the NIEIS is used to register unemployed persons. Unemployed persons were observed as they made use of the self-service platforms at the employment offices, while some were assisted by interns.

Secondary Data

In addition to primary data, secondary data was collected, studied and synthesized into the observed reality to ensure recommendations add value to the day to day delivery of employment services. In addition, secondary data revealed other benefits tried and tested elsewhere, which need to be considered and added to the Namibian package in order to significantly reduce youth unemployment. This secondary data includes related research by prior researchers, publications by bodies such as the ILO and those of the MOL, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation and other local government offices. Documents were collected and analyzed throughout the course of the research until saturation was reached. This helped the proposed comprehensive approach for addressing youth unemployment in Namibia. Secondary data was also used to compare what emerged from the research with the findings of previous researchers.

Research procedure

Sampling

Population Sampling

The population for the purpose of this research was unemployed persons in the Khomas region, specifically Windhoek, registered on the NIEIS of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation. Windhoek was chosen for this research because its population has doubled since 1991 due to population growth, and a skewed wage gap

(N$585) which led to rural urban migration as people hoped to access wage employment in the capital city (BoN 1991,1992). It was also selected due to resource constraints which prevent conducting focus group discussions in other locations.

As the focus of the research is youth unemployment, those between ages 15-34 were covered by the study. The NIEIS currently has registered over 70,000 unemployed persons of which 5,679 persons in the Khomas region are between ages 15-34. At the time of developing the research proposal, there were only 46 young persons have managed to access employment through this system. This number had later increased to over 300. But after data cleaning those meeting the criteria of this research were only 18. The questionnaire was meant to be administered on 6 of them but only two were accessible and willing.

Sampling Frame and Sampling Method

The sampling frame was the NIEIS database which registers unemployed persons in Namibia with the hope that potential employers and job-seekers will find one another and converge on a job offer. With regard to the selection of officials, employers and experts who were interviewed, purposive sampling was employed. This allowed the researcher to select persons who will aid in answering the research question (Bryman 2012).

In assessing the effectiveness of a programme aimed at retooling and reintegrating construction workers displaced by the 2008 recession in Nebraska, Killingsworth and Grosskopf (2013) used purposive sampling to collect qualitative data, which aided in capturing opinions and experiences of diverse data sources, which is also needed for this research. It also allowed for dynamic interactions.

As the sample was relatively small (four focus groups of not more than twelve persons each), generalizing to the broader population was not the objective of the research.

Participants were sampled in four strata for the purpose of the composition of focus groups, as outlined above. Thereafter, 12 persons were drawn from the pool to establish

each focus group, although the required size was 8. It was necessary to over-recruit so as to cater for possible absenteeism (Bryman, 2012).

The population in each stratum was arranged in alphabetical order and then divided by 12, resulting in each k^{th} person being selected to generate the sample size. Those who were out of Windhoek at the time of the interviews, those with incomplete contact details or who were unreachable as well as duplicated entries were removed from the list.

With regard to the interviews, Table 1 lists the selected officials based on the information and extensive experience they have which assisted in answering the research question:

Table 1: List of Interviewees

Office	Section/Generic Title
Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation	Directorate of Labour Market Services Employment Services Office x2 (just discussions without a questionnaire) Officials responsible for the NIEIS x2
Ministry of Sports, Youth and National Service	Directorate of Youth
National Youth Council	Senior Official
National Youth Service	Not accessible
National Youth Credit Scheme	Senior Official
Namibia Training Authority	Operations Department
Social Security Commission	Development Fund
Labour Market Experts	Labour Market Experts x 2, extra one not accessible
Employers	2 x private sector employers recommended by Labour)

Source: This list was developed based on the literature reviewed.

3.5 Research instrument and data collection

An interview guide was used to direct the focus group discussions. It had semi-structured, mostly open ended questions. An open-ended questionnaire was used to interview unemployed job-seekers, those employed through the efforts of the NIEIS and selected officials, experts and employers.

All interview and focus group discussion recordings were transcribed soon after the sessions, before the data was coded, recoded and then thematically grouped to give structure to the report. This also ensured that data is made sense of and reduced to a manageable size by grouping recurring themes and dropping illogical responses. This paved the way for a thorough interpretation and analysis of the data. In the absence of qualitative research computer software, data preparation was done manually. The six steps of Tesch as cited in Creswell (2009), were used in data preparation and analysis. These steps are listed below:

- Step 1: transcribing and typing up data;
- Step 2: looking at and reading the data to get a general sense of the data and to reflect on its meaning;
- Step 3: coding and recoding the data by bracketing sections and placing into categories;
- Step 4: further reflecting on the codes, data and literature reviewed and then affinity grouping of the coded data to derive themes;
- Step 5: further reflecting on the themes and oscillating between themes, codes, data and literature to get a sense of how themes will be represented in the write-up;
- Step 6: the interpretation of the results.

3.6 Significance of the research

This study contributes to the discourse on unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular. It will also assist policy makers in addressing strategic gaps in the fight against unemployment in Namibia.

3.7 Limitations of the research

In terms of the actual experiences of the unemployed youth, the study was limited to only one of the 14 regions of Namibia and to the youth residing in the capital city who are registered on the NIEIS, from which a small sample was drawn. The findings can therefore not be generalized to the entire population of the unemployed youth. It would have added value to the study if a remote region was also part of the study as it would have added a different dynamic to the plight of the unemployed young persons. However, the strategic gaps analysed at policy level are potentially relevant at a national level. The individual experiences of the youth can also serve as a useful lens through which to view the bigger issues of youth unemployment.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Written consent was obtained from the MLIREC to use the NIEIS as the unit of analysis as well as to interview both the Ministerial staff and unemployed persons on the database. The objectives of the study and the research questions were explained to all participants and they were allowed to ask questions. They were informed that participation is voluntary, without remuneration and they should feel free to opt out at any point in time. None opted out, and this was deemed to be their consent to participate, and this assumption was communicated to them.

Participants were further informed that their responses will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study and that they could use nicknames or pseudonyms if they wish to conceal their identify. Where respondents had to be quoted, only the age and sex of the participants were used. Lastly, participants were informed that their true

identity will be kept anonymous. Upon approval of the study, feedback will be given to the participants who have email accounts and findings and recommendations discussed with the management of the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation, and particularly the Labour Market Services Directorate.

3.9 Time frames

The research proposal, interview guides and questionnaires were approved in February 2017. Permission to use the NIEIS for the purpose of this research was granted in 2015; a request to access the NIEIS database was made and the lists were extracted from the database at the end of May 2017. Focus group discussions were held at the beginning of August 2017, and the interviews of key persons ran concurrently. Data preparation started soon thereafter, and was performed over a period of 3 weeks. The data analysis took place in September and the report was compiled in the middle of September 2017. A second draft was submitted in March 2018.

4 Results

4.1 Labour Market Landscape

At the very onset, research participants in one-on-one interviews and in focus group discussions were asked to reflect on the youth unemployment situation in the country, how it is being dealt with, how it affects them and how they ameliorate its impact, at least for those whom it affects directly.

Unemployment Situation and Causes

Government officials see the youth unemployment situation as a ticking time bomb, thus a serious concern. Officials attribute it to a number of factors including: the youth only having an interest in white collar jobs; the current financial hardships causing the country to experience job-deficient growth; the lack of access to technology and information by the rural youth; and the size of the youth population.

The number of young persons of ages 15 to 24 who are 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) was considered to be a concern as there are no schemes to capture this group immediately when they drop out of school. However, government officials pointed out that youth unemployment is not unique to Namibia, as even industrialized countries are experiencing it.

While consenting that youth unemployment is not a problem unique to Namibia, on their part, the labour market experts regard it as a crisis, serious enough to give nightmares. Job-seekers without a track record find it harder to transition into the labour market as skills are the determinant of employment. Addressing youth unemployment would require a proactive private sector, it was argued. Further arguments are that Namibia is a small economy, and growth in job rich sectors has been slow, especially in the absence of processing and value-addition. Economic growth and high levels of unemployment continue to co-exist. Some attribute this to a policy oversight, in that for long, there were no deliberate actions to create jobs because economic growth was expected to

spontaneously translate in jobs. This was however not the case. There has been growth in the services sector, but this exposes employees to 'bad jobs'.

The absence of an entrenched dual education system and/or incentivized internships, according to participants, prevent the country from producing job-seekers who are job ready and who can compete in the global job market. Some employers indicated that the market is always open for people who are talented. Furthermore, it was stated that the talented people are not looking for jobs as it is the jobs that are looking for them.

Respondents who were or are unemployed singled out the lack of qualifications and experience as the main causes of unemployment. Even those with a Grade 10 certificate are of the opinion that they will not be employed unless they had a Grade 12 certificate, whilst for those with a Grade 12 certificate, a post Grade 12 qualification is what they believe will help get them a job.

Job-seekers with college or university qualifications attribute their status to the lack of experience, opining that employers often set experience requirements too high for freshmen to meet. Some employers confirmed this to be true, and stated that such requirements are being reviewed. The perception is that those who went on internships stand a better chance to be employed while some argued that employers do not even consider internships. However, some employers agreed that they ended up recruiting young people who went through their own internship and graduate programmes.

It was argued that freshmen entering the world of work from colleges and universities should not be required to have experience and should not be made to compete with those already in employment. Respondents remarked that jobs that require years of experience are a clear sign that they are for employed job-seekers. There were employers who indicated that at times job requirements can be too high, and that this is being reviewed.

Across all respondents who are currently unemployed or experienced unemployment in the past few months, there are sentiments that corruption in the form of favoritism, nepotism and tribalism prevents them from entering the labour market. None of the

employers expressed views on corruption. Job-seekers lamented the practice of demanding money from the penniless to secure their employment.

There are views that recruitment processes are a formality, as appointments are made beforehand and such exercises are to rubber stamp the process, with some saying *"…but when you know someone, it's easier to find a job… Because sometimes people get paid to give people jobs." [female, aged 28].* These views were expressed both in focus group discussions as well as one-on-one interviews, contesting that employers risk not benefiting from the talents of the youth, when they do not appoint staff in a meritocratic manner. Furthermore, there were views that being connected to people in the system, i.e. with employers', eases entry into the labour market.

Research participants bemoaned having the weak social capital. However, others argued against social capital, as this was seen as tantamount to corruption. On bribery, a job seeker cried out saying:

> "*And then you get these answers that ja, there's this person, you have to pay me this amount to get into this position. And then you ask yourself the question, how would you ask someone that's looking for a job money to pay you? Where will I get the money? It's a struggle to do the CV the whole thing is just. Being unemployed, it's, depression*." [Female, 23].

The limited capacity of employers to absorb the majority of the job-seekers was another factor seen to cause unemployment. This is in consideration of the size of the youth population, and the creation of companies which does not result in the creation of a significant number of jobs.

The lack of access to both technology and information is also a factor that affects entry into the labour market because the cost of smartphones, data and newspapers is said to be overwhelming.

Other factors are language barriers for the less educated, and inadequate preparation at the stage of putting in the job application, attending the interview and entering the world of work. Employers confirmed that employees who will hit the ground running are preferred as it takes on average 6 to12 months to learn the ropes, although self-efficacy plays a role in determining the pace of learning. The task of training new recruits appears to be burdensome, and job-seekers claim that employers do not want to train them. In addition, the lack of income support makes it hard to visit employers in search of a job. Some job-seekers narrated how interviews were missed due to not having transport money and also how job-search efforts are intensified by the presence of money. A senior government official suggested the need for a combination of passive and active labour market programmes, arguing that passive interventions do make job-seekers active.

The job-seekers acceded that they lack innovation and creativity, and that there is no sense of urgency from their side, causing some to remain unemployed. Job-seekers, it was contested, do not put in an extra effort in finding a job. When an internship opportunity occurs, it is sometimes not used as a platform to market oneself to the employers, oblivious to the fact that employers use this platform to spot talent, as one employer stated. Although some job-seekers were opposed to marketing themselves or trying to have the right attitude as these are in no way a guarantee for a job, the remainder of the research participants including employers concurred that attitudes need changing. An employer added that a highly skilled employee with a wrong attitude is not worth investing in, as attitude is a major consideration.

Officials who administer the NIEIS confirm that job-seekers without experience and qualifications are often rejected by employers, and this amplifies the “dead-weight” argument (i.e. that job placement assistance in the absence of social protection and labour activation) advanced earlier. Employers require years of experience, which the majority of the job-seekers registered on the system do not have. Job-seekers and vacancies are misaligned, hence the difficulty to match many of the job-seekers. Thus,

even if one has the qualifications, the lack of experience will be a barrier to entering the labour market.

From the employers' perspective, youth unemployment is high as a result of a lack of discipline, work ethics and attitude issues from the side of the youth. There were employers who argued that the youth have high salary demands, and do not want to enter the labour market low and then work their way up. Job-seekers do not want to push harder, and are often quick to exit the labour market.

Research participants, particularly government officials and labour market experts, asserted that the type of unemployment Namibia experiences is a mixture of structural, frictional and seasonal, although structural manifests itself stronger than the rest. From the government officials, the programmes used to fight youth unemployment are thus argued to address the type of unemployment the country experiences. There were however some who disputed this claim, indicating that there is a disconnect between the type of unemployment Namibia experiences and the responses to it.

Job-seekers were asked to express themselves on how they view unemployment and being unemployed. Responses to these questions were richer and profound in the focus group discussions than they were in the one-on-one interviews. These respondents viewed being unemployed as an inability, a lack or failing, which are all linked to having no access to money or an income. This in turn robs them of their capacity to take decisions and an opportunity to provide for their own and their family's day to day needs, for life revolves around money:

> *"Unemployment for me it's like a disease, a serious disease that I can't get rid of. Cos, if you are unemployed, everybody is looking down on you. You don't have access to anything and everything. Your kids are getting hungry. If you are unemployed, you can't even send them to school, you can't take them to health facilities because everything is money. Money, you get if you are employed. Who*

wants to help someone who is unemployed? So, it's very very awful." [Female, aged 29]

Unemployment Effects and Challenges

Respondents who are currently unemployed or those who in the past few months were unemployed were asked to reflect on how being unemployed affects them, as well as the challenges they encounter. While job-seekers mentioned some positive effects of being unemployed, the negative effects appeared to outweigh the positive. On the one hand, positive effects included having more time and freedom to travel, introspect, plan, be creative, learn to live on less, study and spend quality time with loved ones, especially children. On the other hand, negative effects ranged from depression, stress, frustration hypertension, other health risks to a general feeling of 'nothingness'. It leads to one being deserted by loved ones such as family, friends and even spouses. For the latter, this could result in killing.

Job-seekers described being unemployed as a bad thing, a disaster which forces them to live with and be dependent on others. Often, one is excluded from social settings such as family meetings as the opinions that count are those of people who can provide financially. While unemployment poses health risks, paradoxically, it also disenables them to access health care as some cannot afford to pay the (already modest) hospital fees.

It appeared that idleness in and of itself is a major challenge which has the potential to lead one into doing unwanted things, such as stealing, being on the streets and using elicit substances. Being unemployed affects the respect one gets from society, as stated below:

"*It makes me feel bad most of the time because not even the kids at home will respect you if you don't have a job*." [Male, aged 23]

This sign of disrespect, according to the job-seekers, is also experienced at the employers' places as they walk door-to-door in search of a job. It is suspected that

curriculum vitae are even discarded the moment the job-seekers exit employers' premises. Corruption discourages them from applying for jobs, as this is seen as a waste of money because those in the system allegedly arrange jobs for job-seekers with connections. It is also discouraging to see piles of applications for a single position. Some job-seekers claim to have given up on government vacancies because they regard these as a formality (i.e. already allocated). There is also a feeling that overqualified job-seekers tend to be hired at the expense of those who meet the minimum requirements. This then results in under-employment for over-qualified job-seekers.

Although the literature suggests that the rural youth move to urban settings in search of better labour market prospects, it emerged that unemployment fuels migration to the outlying areas as well. There were mixed sentiments on whether unemployment effects males more than females. In some family settings it appears that there are greater expectations from males as heads of the family, while in other settings such expectations can be on either male or female.

Job-seekers also have to deal with the challenge of seeing their peers waking up early to go to work, while they remain home idle. This is in addition to seeing others prosper in life, while they have to contend with the fact that there are things in life they cannot have as they do not have the means. According to these respondents, it takes strength not to be envious, but to remain positive and focused. To some, being unemployed is such an embarrassing state that they opt to fake being employed, or they choose to hide from their employed peers.

The situation is such that out of desperation, job-seekers would apply for jobs even way above their levels, or opt to settle for any kind of job, which for graduates is often not in tune with qualifications. This results in a derailed career, as one is denied a chance to gain skills in the field he/she studied. However, there were job-seekers who argued that they would rather remain unemployed than settle for a job in a field other than that in which they are qualified. This also includes remaining unemployed instead of enduring bad treatment at the hands of the employers. The unemployment situation is seen to

result in dashed dreams as job-seekers expected to be employed, productive and in the process of building their future, but they are paralyzed by unemployment.

Some job-seekers indicated that it is challenging to even search for a job as they cannot afford to make copies of their documents, visit companies and attend interviews. They end up walking long distances to look for a job, and have to endure the silence from the employers as feedback is often scanty. Job-seekers revealed that the real impact of unemployment is only felt when it hits them. Not being called for an interview is said to make them despondent.

Importance of Employment

Job-seekers were asked about the importance they attached to a job. It came to light that a job is seen as the key to having money, as a job is preferred, as money from other sources is regarded as transient. This is because a job is seen as giving structure to a person's life by waking up early every day, and expecting an income at a specified time. Employment income is viewed as being more lasting and sustainable. Unemployed job-seekers see a job as a bridge to self-employment because it allows a person to gain valuable skills and save up the capital needed in enterprise development. It brings in income which is needed to provide for the daily needs of the person and his/her family and allows one to contribute to government through taxes. It also emerged that being employed is seen as boosting a person's credibility to borrow money even from social structures.

From a labour market perspective, being employed is regarded by job-seekers as an opportunity to apply one's knowledge and a platform to gain skills and master one's career, which aid in the growth of the business of the employer. From a family lens, not only does employment afford one a chance to plough back into the family, but it also opens up an opportunity for younger siblings to further their studies because of the perceived return on the education investment. At a personal level, it gives independence, decision making powers and is a reward to the person for the years of hard work.

Societal Responses and Coping Issues

Unemployed job-seekers were further asked to discuss how society treats them in their current state, and what coping mechanisms they employ to remain strong and focused during this period. As job-seekers indicated that the real impact of unemployment is only realized when one becomes unemployed, it also goes that those who show more empathy to unemployed job-seekers are those who are currently or were previously unemployed.

Society is said to be insensitive to the plight of the unemployed, asking questions and making remarks that tend to be painful. Often, questions such as 'did you find a job', 'why are you still unemployed', 'where did you study', 'what did you study' are seemingly unappreciated by the victims of unemployment. A job seeker stated:

"……...it's like an everyday thing in the face. I used my money, I worked very hard, I sent you my money, you came back with this paper and you're not getting a job. It becomes a frustration. It's like a tone. I get it every day." [Female, aged 23]

Such questions are said to be blunt and daily reminders that there is something wrong with the job-seekers or what they studied and where they studied, and are thus unappreciated. According to the unemployed research participants, they are labelled as being lazy and a waste of money, despite their numerous efforts to find employment. This makes them doubt themselves and their qualifications. Society looks down on them, and excludes them from taking part in decision making platforms. The pressure from society can be strong enough to push job-seekers into social ills such as prostitution, just so they can have access to money and participate in family matters.

There are however other job-seekers who are of the opinion that unemployed persons are well treated by society to the extent that society makes them so comfortable that they have no urgency to look for a job. Those in this line of thinking argue that unemployed people live a stress-free life, at the expense of those who are employed.

Attitudes

While there were no specific questions asked about attitudes, it came to light that there are issues of attitude, which have a negative impact on labour market outcomes. Attitude issues are observed among job-seekers, government officials and employers alike. The youth appears to have conflicts among themselves, which prevents them from addressing issues affecting them as a united front. When given financial assistance to run group projects, at times funds get diverted and used for personal gain.

It was also observed that the youth remains ignorant, despite there being several youth-focused interventions in various government Ministries. The youth fails to acquaint themselves with and access such interventions. This accusation against the youth can also be confirmed by this research. The majority of the job-seekers who participated in this research were unaware of such interventions. The NIEIS, needless to say, was the only intervention many were aware of. Despite concerns raised that the youth has become impatient, there could be merit in observations by others that the youth are demoralized, and thus their apathy towards what is happening around them.

Employers view the youth as not disciplined and lacking a sense of responsibility and morals. There is no willingness to work harder and go the extra mile. The youth appears to be after high salaries and are reportedly quick to jump ship in favour of the employer offering the highest salary. There is thus, according to some employers, no willingness and sacrifice from the youth to start small and work their way up. This issue was extensively debated in one of the focus groups, as some were of the view that there should be jobs at any level for what one studied, thus negating the need for one to start low. The other side of the room felt it is better to start small than remain unemployed.

In the same vein, there were employers who acknowledged that there is a need for a change in mindset within leadership structures of companies. This is necessary to give inexperienced employees the benefit of the doubt and assign senior level responsibilities

in order to nurture and grow them. Such change of mindset is also necessary in committing senior employees to on-board novices, as this is regarded as burdensome.

Among themselves, job-seekers took the blame for not exhibiting a sense of urgency in their job search efforts and that they should do what it takes to be busy as being busy is regarded as the antidote to doing 'bad things'. This, it was noted, requires the youth to be self-driven, enterprising and able to improvise so that they can get much done with little. It was said:

"Sometimes us the youth we are lazy, we are very lazy. We just want things to be handed out to us. We lie at home like, call me when you have something there and tell me like. We need to get up and we need to do something about it. Like we need to like go places, do things, make our voices be heard and things like that. We need to stand together to get employed." [Female, aged 28]

The young job-seekers acknowledged that at times they can have too high expectations, which prevents their entry into the labour market. It was felt that job-seekers need to be more proactive, with a go-getter attitude. Concerns were raised about government officials who use their offices to advance their own interests, diverting benefits aimed at addressing unemployment to themselves. Some officials allegedly withhold information from beneficiaries deliberately, to ensure they do not benefit. There was a clarion call for a change in mindset across all structures seeking to address unemployment. There were employers who indicated that the youth has a role to play in that they should prepare themselves well, read and research to improve performance during interviews.

4.2. Labour Market Instruments

Transitioning Efforts

There appeared to be a plethora of programmes within government and related institutions, all aimed at addressing youth unemployment. Government is said to have done well in setting up institutions, but programmes these institutions administer seem to

co-exist with high and rising levels of youth unemployment. The NIEIS has as its underlying objective the reduction in unemployment, which it seeks to achieve through collecting information on labour supply and demand, and matching these in a manner that results in a job placement. It also seeks to bring equity in the labour market by ensuring equal access to information. However, this research confirmed that there is a disconnect between vacancies on the NIEIS and the profiles of those it seeks to place in such vacancies.

As NIEIS is currently running dual systems, electronic and manual, it is difficult to judge its success in job placement. Data sanitation is a challenge and this effects the quality of data extracted from the system. Besides registering job-seekers and vacancies, other labour market interventions are not rendered proactively, but rather as and when the need arises. These interventions include assistance with the preparation of job application documents, vocational counselling and testing. Skills development programmes are not offered. Research participants were of the view that there are skills which, through targeted interventions, can be acquired in a relatively short period, and will ensure absorption of the 'hard-to-place job-seekers. It is for reasons such as the absence of skills development interventions that some viewed labour market interventions as disconnected from the type of unemployment Namibia experiences.

The officials at the forefront of the NIEIS believe that it is an excellent intervention and as it grows in popularity and efficiency, it has the potential to address unemployment effectively. The assessment of the success of NIEIS, from the viewpoint of its administrators, is based on the number of job-seekers registered and successfully placed. However, the final placement decision is taken by the employer, although the latter is expected to provide reasons when a candidate recommended by NIEIS is rejected. Most employers aspire to recruit staff who are experienced and qualified. As one employer stated, it is better to hire employees who will hit the ground running, as it takes unskilled workers up to a year to learn the ropes. This confirms claims by job-seekers that most are unemployed because they lack experience. The pool of job-seekers registered on the

NIEIS seem not to meet these requirements most of the time. Specialized and managerial positions are found to be difficult to match because the needed profiles are not found on the NIEIS. Some employers resort to scouting for talent and potential and incur the cost of developing such employees as they argue the younger a person, the more flexible he/she is to molding.

The number of job-seekers registered on the NIEIS at a point in time could be over 70,000, while vacancies are only eight percent of that, generated by around 700 employers. It is claimed that circa 5,000 job-seekers were successfully placed. This figure does not factor in short term contract employees and those who experience multiple spells of unemployment. There are also no deliberate measures that ensure job retention as well as to track or assess the quality of the matches made, besides the quantities registered.

The NIEIS as a web-based system that is accessible to a wide range of users, including employers and employees, at times does experience down times and efficiency challenges. Other than the matching function, there are no other labour market interventions which are directly and proactively offered or caused to be offered by the NIEIS. Labour market experts and employers suggested that there is a need to effectively prepare the youth for the world of work. Employers further indicated that more post-placement interventions are required to instill basic values and build soft skills of new, young recruits. This is because young people are in a world of their own and technology effects their interpersonal skills.

Some job-seekers are satisfied with the ease of accessing the NIEIS, to the extent that they have access to the internet and electronic gadgets. Satisfaction in many instances is based on the ease of access, i.e. at a ‘click of a button’, access to information and its cost efficiency. However, other users show dissatisfaction for as long as the NIEIS has not succeeded in landing them a job. Thus, the main reason job-seekers use the NIEIS is the hope to be employed, and naturally their satisfaction will be determined by entering

the labour market. For those without the requisite technology and internet access, especially the rural youth, NIEIS is an intervention beyond their reach.

While specialized and managerial positions appear to be difficult to fill using data from the NIEIS, job-seekers with post high school qualifications indicated that there are hardly vacancies on the NIEIS matching their profiles. The same sentiments were echoed by employers. Job-seekers tend to feel valued if feedback on their applications is given, even if it is negative, as opposed to the silence currently experienced by some from the side of the employers. Some job-seekers show satisfaction with the NIEIS on the basis of the feedback received, even if they remain unemployed. Job-seekers view the NIEIS as a window through which employers can see them.

Based on participants' remarks, it will be more beneficial if the NIEIS could expand the employer or vacancy base. These sentiments were echoed by some government officials, who called for a complete register of all employers and vacancies in the country. With this, it is important that the NIEIS provides information on what matters, such as to whom a certain position reports and where it sits in the entire company. It will be even more beneficial if the NIEIS could send job-seekers vacancy alerts as they come in, as well as to apply for jobs on their behalf because some vacancies close without being noticed. There was a loud cry to the NIEIS to help job-seekers get on interview lists of employers, and to leave the rest to the individual job-seekers to prove themselves.

Research participants indicated that it is not beneficial to enhance employability without concomitant efforts to create new jobs. It was requested of the relevant players to be robust and create a few but large job creation projects that can absorb many job-seekers. Government officials were of the view that government needs to expand its industries in order to absorb new modern skills. It also should introduce effective public works programmes and must avail funds for job creation as employability interventions without jobs will be a futile exercise. There appeared to be job creation projects identified but implementation is suspended due to the lack of funds.

Another suggestion was an earmarked tax to be used in fighting unemployment. In addition, labour market experts called on government to assume an interventionist role in drawing in foreign direct investment (FDI). This is to ensure that the needs of the citizens and residents are taken into consideration, and growth yields jobs. This, it was argued, should involve identifying job-rich sectors, prioritizing these and ensuring they are effectively developed and grown. While there is a need to promote youth employment, government was advised to be careful about potential crowding-out effects. In their arguments, sectors such a tourism, renewable energy, SMEs and agriculture were pinpointed as having great potential to create jobs. In the sector of agriculture, it is advised to promote home-driven agribusiness with strong elements of value addition and processing. A culture of local production, local procurement and local consumption needs to be entrenched, according to participants.

Labour market experts argued that although the services industry creates many jobs, it exposes workers to 'bad jobs'. It was also contested by government officials that employment subsidies are key to fighting unemployment. In terms of harvesting low-hanging fruits, it was suggested that funds should be availed to the regions to fill vacant positions, and that uniformed staff be deployed at critical points e.g. border posts and in anti-poaching efforts. Also, those who get government tenders should be compelled to employ job-seekers, and compliance should be monitored.

Government officials conceded that transitioning is a challenge and that it is time to come up with needs based solutions. Skills mismatches and limited job opportunities are a real concern. According to some government officials, there is a need to develop rural areas as a strategy to dampen urban migration. Robust job creation projects and targeted approaches are required. However, there was no detail on which projects specifically could reduce unemployment, except plans to establish fourteen youth enterprises, one per region and community projects like de-bushing and investing in food production. Implementation is subject to funds being accessed.

There are employers who experience a high rate of staff turnover from the youth cohort. Despite some running staff retention schemes, poaching and exits are experienced. Although this might not necessarily have an effect on unemployment, it certainly carries cost implications on the side of the employer. Thus, some tend to recruit from within to curb the cost. Employers too experience challenges in recruiting for specialist positions because other employers make counters offers in order to keep their best employees. Retention is said to be harder at lower levels for some employers.

Unemployed job-seekers are of the opinion that old workers deny them the opportunity to be employed and should retire in order to free space for them to occupy.

> *"Do you know why like in the government there are not opportunities for us young people? Because those people they don't want to retire. They want to stay there they don't want to leave. There's no change in government, there's no change."* [Female, aged 21]
>
> *and,*
>
> "*I think like some companies and government, some people are just there. They must recruit the old peoples so that they can go rest so that they provide us with work. Cause you can find someone who is 60 years old but is still working but there is an opportunity for us who are just sitting at home doing nothing."* [Female, aged 24]

There were however those who opposed this move due to the negative impact it would have on the retirement income of the affected workers. There are, at the same time employers who offer attractive retirement packages to encourage early retirement.

In acceptance of the reality that without experience, entry into the labour market is a challenge, job-seekers yearned for an opportunity to gain experience which includes hands-on training for them to pick up practical skills and hone their job search skills. Job-seekers called for the creation of more companies which they hope to result in more job

opportunities and that jobs must be created closer to where they live. There is, according to job-seekers, a need for them to benefit from vocational testing and counselling, to ensure they follow the right career paths.

The uneducated youth feels crowded-out and indicated a desire to have targeted interventions, including jobs for this category of job-seekers and language training. It was proposed that for this category, those aged 15 to 24 should be captured by training and education programmes, while the remainder could be marshalled into self-employment after skills development interventions. Some employers encouraged others to welcome learners to spend time in the world of work, in order to understand how their aspired careers function in the real world, thus acting as career guidance avenues.

Although from among the research participants there was a small number of job-seekers who are discouraged and have given up searching for a job due to cost and rejection, this is not the case for the rest of the job-seekers. Most job-seekers interviewed are actively looking for employment, some on a daily basis. Word of mouth seems to be the medium through which many get to know about the NIEIS.

Job-seekers expect government to help them cope with unemployment, even to include job-seekers in conducting surveys. For those who got government study loans, their need for a job is more urgent and they indicated to be in need of guaranteed jobs to repay study loans. Job-seekers lamented government's practice of employing foreigners at the expense of local job-seekers. However, some government officials revealed that while youth unemployment is high, there is equally a high demand for labour, which fuels the importation of skills. This supports the argument that skills mismatch is one of the causes of unemployment.

Being compared with experienced job-seekers is seen as a practice that undercuts fresh graduates who are inexperienced. They claim to be in need of a chance to begin. Unemployment made the graduate job-seekers realize that a paper qualification on its

own does not necessarily guarantee a job, and there is thus a need for labour market interventions over and above qualifications.

In stimulating job growth, a suggestion was made which could empower the private sector to absorb more job-seekers. The proponent asserted that this could entail giving incentives such as free land or tax relieve, in exchange for jobs.

Education and Training

Job-seekers as well as those who got employment in the past few months expressed a deep desire to be trained. Training is seen as key to gaining practical skills. It was also requested of government to allow those who fail school to repeat. A senior government official proposed the introduction of a training or education scheme that timeously captures people aged 15 to 24, thus removing them from the 'not in education, employment or training' NEET category and usher them into a productive life. This is believed to cut unemployment by half. Participants were of the view that a dual education system will have a positive effect on the fight against unemployment and it is long overdue. A participant stated that *'we were sleeping on duty'* in support of the introduction of a dual system. Labour market institutions were urged to train for the labour market to ensure easy transitioning and education institutions to have close collaboration with the private sector to effectively address skills mismatch. One participant opined that one cannot expect the private sector to absorb job-seekers if they did not participate in the process of curriculum development. Horizontal linkages were felt pivotal among the various training providers and education institutions to ensure alignment and articulation.

Job-seekers called for targeted interventions for the uneducated youth. This could position such job-seekers well for self-employment, in light of some employers having indicated that all services that could be rendered by people without a Grade 12 certificate are gradually being outsourced. This means the respective employers do not employ anyone without Grade 12. In addition, government officials and labour market experts raised concerns about certain careers being unpopular and that these, particularly

careers in vocational education and training (VET) and agriculture, should be popularized. The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is considered as key to transitioning job-seekers into the labour market. A continuous process of skilling, reskilling and upskilling is thought to be a necessity.

Investment in early childhood education and compulsory entrepreneurship education at school level were emphasized. It was also advised that a balance should be struck between investment in academic and technical qualifications, as there is a role for both in the economy. This was because of the view that the scale is tilted in favour of academic qualifications.

On their part, employers indicated their desire to train their workforce, although the cost of training can be overwhelming. Government was called on by some employers to ensure funds collected under the training levy are ring fenced and re-invested in the training programmes of the specific employer who paid the levy. There are employers who indicated that skills-development is done proactively through under-study arrangements, international exchanges, graduate programmes, internships and other means.

Job-seekers argued that even if they are made to access skills development programmes at a reduced rate or at no cost, access could still be an issue due to the cost of transport. To ameliorate this, it was proposed that schools and training centres must be located closer to job-seekers' residences to allow them to walk.

While waiting to be employed, job-seekers thought it wise to be kept busy and in training. This is to allow the productive use of their time and energy, and to prevent involvement in bad activities, emphasizing how frustrating idleness is.

> "*If I don't have the means, then I just stay at home doing nothing, nothing at all. And to do nothing is very stressful, just being there in the four corners of your wall. It's very stressful."* [Female, aged 29]

Entrepreneurship Support

It came to light that many job-seekers would want to venture into entrepreneurship at some point. Being employed is regarded as a perfect opportunity to gain valuable skills and resources needed to run their own businesses. Artisans were considered as having great potential to generate jobs for themselves and others, and it was argued that they should be assisted to start their own businesses.

Despite the desire for entrepreneurship, job-seekers are presented with challenges barring them from doing so. These include access to capital, premises, transport, skills and markets. There is a wide range of business development services which these young job-seekers would want to benefit from. Such services include business training and mentorship and coaching, which increases chances of success and help unleash innovation and creativity, as opposed to all entrepreneurs running similar ventures. Respondents indicated that the absence of microfinance institutions makes it hard for young entrepreneurs to access capital, considering that commercial banks require collateral which many do not have.

Another deterrent for job-seekers to start their own enterprises is the lack of proper mechanisms to protect intellectual property. The youth bemoaned the practice of presenting ideas for funding or innovation awards, which end up being implemented by others while their applications are turned down. It is argued by job-seekers that business schools and innovation awards are platforms to poach brilliant ideas of the youth. Entrepreneurship is not easy, and job-seekers agreed that one should have the drive to succeed and should work hard.

From the perspective of government officials and labour market experts, a guarded business environment is required. This is specifically to drive local production, local processing, local procurement and consumption of goods and services, even if the quality might at times be below that of imported goods. At the same time, artisans should be supported to move into self-employment.

Social Protection

Although there were no specific questions asked about social protection, in line with expectations, all sessions and interviews pointed out the need for social protection in one way or the other. It was observed that the youth bears the brunt of unemployment, and the absence of a suitable social protection scheme makes the burden heavier.

There was an overwhelming call for income support for unemployed job-seekers which should be used to cover the cost of transport and photocopies during the time people are looking for a job. This is because these are the cost items job-seekers are faced with, and which prevent them from effectively looking for a job in the absence of money. Although the request was made by job-seekers and some government officials, and while labour market experts supported this, they also cautioned against the rise in employment cost, which in the end will make Namibia uncompetitive in attracting foreign investment. Some of the job-seekers felt such income support should be conditional to accessing labour market interventions, and limited in amount and duration to help manage unintended consequences. Specifically, what was identified as needed schemes are unemployment assistance and an unemployment insurance scheme. It was indicated that social grants should be earned, in that they should be in exchange for work done. Therefore, only conditional cash transfers (CCT) should be considered. Job-seekers argued that having a CCT will force those without a sense of urgency to proactively look for a job, because they will no longer have an excuse not to.

Work Integrated Learning

Job-seekers regard a dual education system and internships as arrangements will give them a glimpse into the world of work. Internships are an opportunity for them to develop their soft skills and market themselves to the employer, no longer on paper, but in person. Many felt once given such an opportunity, they will do their utmost to ensure they remain or are called back for employment. However, there were smaller voices which indicated that because internships do not guarantee employment, there is no need for one to market

him/herself to the employer. On the other hand, employers indicated that internships are platforms used to scout for talent. Some confirmed having employed many of their interns.

Job-seekers acknowledged that getting an internship opportunity is a challenge. Some do avail themselves to volunteer, but because they come from disadvantaged backgrounds, it becomes difficult to accept unpaid internships due to their inability to afford the cost of transport.

It emerged that employers do not have the patience to teach interns or to on-board new employees, as this has to be done in addition to their regular work. However, some employers stated that they offer apprenticeship programmes, through which most of their younger employers accessed permanent employment. Employers requested government to offer internship incentives to encourage them to take on more interns. Job-seekers on their part requested government to compel private sector to offer a specified number of internships per year. Job-seekers also suggested that win-win internship arrangement should be negotiated with SMEs, because some entrepreneurs own businesses but do not know how to run them. Job-seekers could then aid in filling those gaps while boosting their profiles at the same time. Resulting from a follow-up question, job-seekers welcomed the suggestion of a national compulsory paid internship programme for all graduates while waiting for employment.

4.3 Labour Market Delivery Platforms

Institutional Arrangements & Governance

There seemed to be a great number of institutions and government offices tasked with addressing unemployment. However, many of these are said to be operating in silos, hence, participants suggested that there should be consolidation of these entities. A One Roof platform was proposed to house this repertoire of labour market interventions which are currently fragmented. It is regarded as a befitting arrangement that will reduce the number of players and make a significant dent on unemployment. Such positive labour market outcomes, according to respondents, can be achieved as the duplication of efforts

will be removed and pulling resources together will result in better outcomes. There should also be interfaces with other stakeholders for sharing mutually beneficial information.

Stakeholder collaboration was regarded as key because a multi-sectoral approach is needed in addressing unemployment. It is deemed better to seek coordination and smart partnerships. Parents too, have a role to play. From the discussions, it was felt that youth unemployment should be a cross-cutting issue, with youth desks in various institutions.

Some entities tasked with addressing unemployment deplored policy limitations which affect the execution of their programmes. There are programmes which ought to have been implemented but which are frozen due to a lack of drivers. Policy implementation in various institutions remains a challenge.

Respondents stated that stakeholders do not have a culture of sharing and collaborating, and they have a tendency to claim glory only to themselves. Corruption, which rears its head through favouritism, nepotism, bribery and tribalism, hinders the effective delivery of labour market instruments and research participants called on government and private sector to eradicate it. It also effects equitable access to interventions and employment.

The youth was called upon to be actively involved in programmes which are offered for their benefit. Participants agreed that it is important for solutions to youth problems to be youth driven and that the youth be a united front that speaks with one voice and offer mutual support.

5 Discussion of Results

5.1 Validity, reliability and replication

Validity

Unemployment in Namibia is high at 34% and highest among the youth at 43.4% (NSA, 2017). It is argued to be a national crisis. Therefore, generalizing the findings of this study based on a small sample and which was purposively selected is cautioned (Bryman, 2012). However, the study yielded valuable lessons which the Labour Ministry of Namibia could use to positively influence labour market outcomes. This is specifically because the strategic gaps analysis at policy level and thus the research can be construed to have a national character on that basis.

Individual interviews were conducted in addition to focus group discussions. This gave the researcher an opportunity to compare and contrast the views advanced at the various sessions and thus acted as a validation mechanism as well. Particularly, this allowed a comparison of views of givers and recipients of employment and employment services. To the extent possible, the findings were also shared with a selected number of participants for validation before the final report was issued (Bryman, 2012).

Reliability

Research findings and recommendations were peer-reviewed by other researchers. This helped with comparing notes and appreciating divergent perspectives derived from the extensive experience and knowledge of such persons, thereby enhancing reliability (Bryman, 2012).

Replicability

The procedures followed in arriving at the research findings are spelled out in great detail in this study. This is in order to allow for replication by other researchers. However, replication is not one of the strengths of a qualitative study (Bryman, 2012).

5.2 Interpretation of Research Findings

The data preparation stage resulted in all data collected from one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions being placed under three broad themes which are: 1) labour market landscape; 2) labour market instruments; and 3) labour market delivery platforms. The data as collected and presented in the preceding chapter will be interpreted and discussed below under these three broad themes.

5.2.1 Labour Market Landscape

The type of unemployment Namibia is faced with is predominantly structural in nature (Mwinga, 2012), although other types are also present. Addressing structural unemployment and youth unemployment in particular requires focused, well-executed and intensively applied active labour market policies). However, there are no deliberate linkages between the NIEIS or the Public Employment Service (PES) as a whole and ALMPs (ILO, 2017), rendering the NIEIS an unsuitable intervention to address structural unemployment.

The NIEIS was introduced to reduce unemployment. However, for as long as there are no tactical interventions to enhance the employability of the 'hard-to-employ' job-seekers (who are in the majority), through skilling, reskilling and upskilling, the efforts of the NIEIS will at best result in 'dead weight' (Burgess, 2003). This implies that the majority of job-seekers the NIEIS will place in available vacancies will be those who would have been employed without the intervention of the NIEIS.

Cyclical unemployment is experienced by all countries as they respond to booms and slumps in the global economy (Mwinga, 2012). Namibia is currently going through financial hardships and companies are retrenching employees. This type of unemployment is addressed through fiscal policies as these are necessary to stimulate aggregate demand which then translates in the expansion of the economy and job growth. There are no deliberate efforts and thus no established active protocols between the Ministry of Labour and that of Trade (ILO, 2017) to ensure appropriate incentives to

stimulate job growth particularly at this time when the country is experiencing financial hardships. Therefore, there continues to be a disjoint between labour demand and supply in that the number of job-seekers far outstrips available job openings. On the other hand, the skills mismatch implies that job openings and unemployment continue to co-exist as job-seekers do not meet job specifications.

There is no formal social protection for unemployed persons either in the form of a contributory scheme or social assistance or both. This makes unemployment a burden, and job search a costly exercise on the unemployed job-seekers (ILO, 2017; Namupala, 2016) because looking for a job is associated with the cost of transport, photocopies and attending interviews. This research reveals that job search intensity is determined by the job-seekers' access to money. A decline in financial resources dampens search activities.

Unemployment Situation and Causes

Three key challenges emerged from the data on the causes of youth unemployment. The first challenge is that the youth is ill-prepared to occupy openings in the job market. This is attributed to either a lack of education, skills, experience, the right attitude or all. These are the aspects employers look for in potential employees as they require staff who will 'hit the ground running'. Failing these, job-seekers will not meet the expectations of employers and the issue of skills mismatch will be further perpetuated. There is an explicit dichotomy between the expectations of government and the requirements of employers. Employers want employees who can instantly do the work with limited supervision and support, while government expects employers to instantly absorb as many job-seekers as possible. The middle ground appears to be in a deeply entrenched dual education system that combines classroom theory with industry practice as well as a well-structured and incentivized programme of internships and apprenticeships and also employment subsidies, which are currently non-existent across the board.

The second challenge is that the economy is not creating the required number and type of jobs necessary to absorb a growing number of job-seekers. The fact that economic

growth coexists with high levels of unemployment points to a deep rooted structural imbalance. At the same time, graduates from academic and technical institutions graduate into a culture of job-seekers and not job creators. As it stands, the efforts of the NIEIS will not correct this imbalance and it will not achieve its underlying goal of reducing unemployment. This is because the employers will continue to employ those who meet their requirements, and the majority who do not, will remain on the periphery of the labour market.

The third challenge is that the majority of job-seekers do not have post high school qualifications as they drop out of school too early and they are neither allowed to repeat school nor is there a scheme that captures this group and aid them to gain (technical) skills or venture into entrepreneurship. These are the job-seekers whom employers will continue to reject because they do not possess skills employers require. Some employers indicated that the work typically done by workers in this education category is increasingly being outsourced. However, the NIEIS continues to attract and register this group on the database, and hopes to have them absorbed, without any targeted intervention.

Unemployment Effects, Challenges and the Importance of Employment

Job-seekers prefer to be employed as they associate employment with productivity, a structured lifestyle, stability and independence. It gives people a status in society and commands respect. Being employed is an opportunity to gain skills, master one's career, study further, save money and/or venture into entrepreneurship. It is a springboard to self-employment. Bay and Blekesaune (2002) refer to paid employment as the admission ticket to a number of consumer goods, further contesting that it develops a person's skills, capability and social standing.

On the other end, unemployment is associated with only a few positives, like learning how to survive with little resources, having unlimited time for oneself and family and unlimited freedom. The negative effects of and challenges associated with unemployment are astronomical and can be so severe that they can lead to killing and suicide. Job-seekers

aspire to be employed in order to have access to money. Paradoxically, money is required in order to look for a job i.e. to cover the cost of transport to employers, photocopies and to attend interviews. This introduces multiple barriers to entering the labour market, in addition to education, skills, experience and attitudes.

Societal Responses and Coping Issues

It is picked up from the data that a balance needs to be struck between making job-seekers over-comfortable in their state due to abundance, and making them excessively despondent due to lack. It is clear that being unemployed is an emotional burden on the one experiencing it, and society has the potential to lesson or worsen the load, depending on how it treats unemployed job-seekers. It can be concluded from the experience of job-seekers that there is a need for public education on what unemployment does to an individual and how society ought to interact with those it affects directly. This could include the language to use or refrain from, and activities that could help job-seekers strengthen their coping mechanisms.

Attitudes

It is clear from data collected that from all sides there are attitudinal issues which hinder the free interaction of the employer and job seeker. On the one hand, employers do not want to go the extra mile to empower the employee and they do not entrust bigger responsibilities with these novices, job-seekers argued. On the other hand, employers argue that job-seekers do not want to go the extra mile and work their way up. It was further indicated that, government officials tend to use their offices for own gain.

5.2.2 Labour Market Instruments

Youth unemployment is a complex issue, which cannot be addressed by government alone or by a single intervention. Instead, it requires a repertoire of purposefully selected and professionally designed and implemented interventions.

While the cost of accessing employment services is covered by the public, unemployed persons still require funds to access the entire continuum of services that will aid their chances of getting employment (Burgess, 2003; Namupala, 2016). This places a huge burden on job-seekers, especially those from needy backgrounds. The job search intensity of job-seekers tends to rise and drop with the presence or absence of money at the disposal of the individual job seeker. There is therefore a need for a social protection scheme for unemployed persons, either in the form of a contributory scheme, a social assistance scheme or both (Sianesi, 2003; van den Heever, 2017).

Being driven solely by the desire to ensure unemployed persons land a job leads to inaccurate matches and thus an inability to retain the job and build a career path (Burgess, 2003). It exposes people to multiple spells of unemployment and precarious employment. This research gathered that there are job-seekers who have experienced multiple spells of unemployment. It further found that there is a tendency for job-seekers to settle for any job instead of remaining unemployed, which in the case of graduates derails their careers because they end up doing what they did not study. It is suggested that any job is preferable to the state of joblessness, as all jobs inevitably provide access to the latent benefits of employment (Jahoda,1982 as cited in Creed & Bartrum, 2006).

There are no measures targeted towards or deliberate expected outcomes for the 'hard to employ' persons in order to improve their employability and fast track their exit out of unemployment. This could lead to them being parked, while creaming the 'easy-to-place' job-seekers (Burgess, 2003). Some job-seekers regarded the hard-to-place group as the forgotten or uneducated youth.

Job-seekers are heterogeneous, thus a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not apt (Burgess, 2003). There should be a quantum of employment services to choose from, based on the individual needs of job-seekers. There are no 'point-of-entry' assessments to determine whether there are job-seekers in need of counselling services, especially the 'hard-to-place' job-seekers like the long term job-seekers, vulnerable groups and those with multiple barriers to entering the labour market. Research indicate that counseled job-

seekers exit unemployment at a higher rate than the non-counseled (Cahuc, 2008). Counselling services are available at the Public Employment Service Bureau, although coordination is weak and where counselling is offered, it is often offered on an ad hoc basis. The job search assistance at the bureau neither monitors job-search activities of individuals proactively nor does it assess the career opportunities of individuals, which should be a standard feature of this service (Caliendo et al., 2008) to help determine the skills development programmes suited for the individual.

5.2.3 Labour Market Delivery Platforms

This research confirmed that the labour market landscape is severely fragmented. This leads to entities operating in silos and thus a duplication of efforts. Government has done well in establishing a wide range of institutions that address youth unemployment. However, these are seemingly not effective at reducing youth unemployment. It is important that to the extent possible, these institutions are brought under one room so that they can focus on what they are created for and render a set of highly professional, effective and integrated labour market interventions.

5.3 Summary of Strategic Gaps in the Policy Framework

This research revealed that the following four strategic gaps, which prevent the country from effectively addressing unemployment:

First, Namibia experiences predominantly structural unemployment. However, there is a disconnect between several interventions and the issue these ought to address. Not all officials are aware of the type of unemployment the country experiences and the type of unemployment the programmes they administer are addressing.

Second, in its current state, the NIEIS addresses frictional unemployment because it has no built-in measures to address structural deficiencies in the labour market such as a structural skills mismatch. Instead, the NIEIS continues to register and promote job-

seekers who do not possess the skills employers are looking for, resulting in a rather low placement rate.

Third, improving employability without concomitant interventions which deliberately seek to stimulate job growth is a futile exercise. Tactical interventions are required to empower the private sector to create jobs especially in the job rich sectors.

Fourth, a significant number of young persons aged 15 to 24 are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Employed job-seekers have better access to jobs than their unemployed contemporaries. However, there are no mechanism in place to level this playing field. Yet, there is no targeted intervention that captures this group and usher them into education, training or (self-)employment. This number keeps increasing year on year and so does the youth unemployment rate.

6 Conclusion and Policy Considerations

6.1 Conclusions

The literature reviewed and data collected revealed that a single standalone employment strategy cannot reduce unemployment. Reducing unemployment requires a comprehensive, integrated strategy that pulls together Trade and Industry, Labour Market Instruments and Social Protection. In such an integration, Social Protection potentially offers conditional cash transfers to job-seekers, subject to the latter participating in labour market programmes for skilling, reskilling, upskilling or entrepreneurship programmes.

For its part, the Ministry of Trade, Industrialization and SME Development's Investment Centre strives to provide an enabling environment that supports business growth and job creation. This argument on integration is backed by various country employment strategies. As an example, through ALMPs, the European Employment Strategy aims to increase the adaptability of workers and enterprises, attract more people into the labour market, and invest in human capital more effectively by adopting a preventive and more active approach (Altavilla & Caroleo, 2006).

It goes without saying that design problems, ineffective delivery platforms and weak systems of monitoring and evaluation will impede the success of ALMPs (Altavilla & Caroleo, 2006). Secondary data collected and reviewed show that Namibia lacks a sense of urgency in implementing solutions to identified issues (Diers, 1994), implementation capacity, policy drivers and political will. Monitoring and evaluation capacity is also weak.

6.2 Policy Considerations

To create employment for about 349,383 unemployed persons, or 246,262 young persons in order to heed the presidential aspiration of full employment, there is a need to develop and promote just a handful of strategic, well targeted concepts which can deliver massive sustainable employment. Thus, it is suggested that the following strategies be considered consistent with the findings of this research:

Tourism Expansion

Tourism is a labour intensive industry. It is estimated that every 11 tourists visiting Namibia create one job. The Tourism Growth Strategy forecasts tourist arrivals to grow from 1,367,000 to 1,500,000 in 2020 (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2016). This could translate into an additional 10,000 jobs. Technological advancement will not completely remove the need to employ people as the tourism business relies significantly on the warm service that can only be delivered by human beings.

For this reason, it is recommended that the Ministry of Labour collaborates proactively with the Ministries of Tourism and Trade to facilitate job creation in the travel and tourism sector. This could be achieved through massive investment in a state-of-the-art cyber building to attract the technology industry to Namibia as part of the multiplier effect of tourism, which could catapult Namibia into becoming a critical player in the IT, logistics and other technology sectors in the region. This could also be achieved through investment in the development of a state-of-the-art International Conference Centre (ICC), which could position Namibia as a formidable player in the Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Events (MICE) market (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2016).

Investment in these two areas could create a massive number of direct and indirect jobs. Tourism is one of the sectors with a strong multiplier effect. The development of the ICC was proposed years back but remains unimplemented. Innovative financing will be necessary and the logistics that support this concept need to be seamless. The multiplier effect the ICC will have on upstream and downstream employment can significantly address unemployment. However, a complete mindset change is needed to make a success of this.

Single Employment Services Platform

Considering how fragmented the labour market landscape in Namibia is, and how this affects the effective and impactful delivery of labour market solutions, it is proposed that the Public Employment Service Bureau (PESB), which is currently a unit within the Labour

Ministry albeit with an independent Board, be turned into an autonomous, Single Employment Services Platform under which a number of fragmented programmes and schemes can be placed. This will positively impact its effectiveness and efficiency, and will also improve its ability to source financial and other resources.

This modernized office can be known as the Public Employment Services Bureau (PESB), and should render comprehensive employment services, made up of Passive and Active Labour Market Programmes. Specifically, the PESB should administer the Unemployment Insurance which was investigated and found to be a viable scheme, and is provided for in the Namibian Constitution. ALMPs should be an integral part of the PESB, which should consist of self-run programmes, as well as strong linkages with programmes run by other labour market institutions, be it public, private or civil. The cycle of skilling, reskilling and upskilling should feature as a crucial intervention of the ALMPs, due to its potential immediate effect on job matching and lowering unemployment. This should be done in close collaboration with employers and in line with available and prospective job openings. It should be noted that without deliberate measures to improve skills development, the NIEIS will continuously yield a 'dead-weight' effect in that it will assist those who, on and by themselves would access the labor market anyway. The biggest challenge lies with the 'hard-to-place' job-seekers, and without targeted interventions, they will find it hard to enter the labour market.

It is important that with the modernization of the PES, it remains an organ of state as opposed to privatizing especially the NIEIS. Privatizing interventions such as the NIEIS is seen by some as the commodification of unemployment, whereby the unemployed are sold to the lowest bidder (Goodman, 1997 as cited in Burgess, 2003). State intervention inherently attempts to shield the unemployed against such practices, particularly in the developing world, more so because of market failure. However, due to the limited capacity of the Namibian PES, staff do not offer sophisticated services especially to highly qualified job-seekers (ILO, 2017). A hybrid platform can be ideal, whereby for selected services, a Purchaser-Provider Model can be used. This will mean that services are

offered based on needs, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. Job-seekers are heterogeneous, with their demands ranging from 'not having a need' for no assistance to 'having a need' for intensive assistance (Burgess, 2003; ILO, 2017).

Under this platform could be housed vocational counselling and testing services, NIEIS, an unemployment insurance fund, tax funded or cross subsidized unemployment benefits, skills development and job creation programmes such as that of the Social Security Commission, more so, considering a recent recommendation to access funds from the latter for the PES (ILO, 2017). The Thai unemployment benefits platform is a good example of an integrated scheme.

Cross-cutting Skills Development Programmes

In the absence of rapid job growth, a continuous cycle of *skilling*, *reskilling* and *upskilling* is indispensable to curbing unemployment because it will increase the chances of perfect matches of vacancies to job-seekers, thus effectively tackling skills mismatch. This would increase productivity and arouse demand for labour. This is against the backdrop that there is currently no skills development intervention for job-seekers who are not employment ready (ILO, 2017) and those who are 'hard to employ'. Skilling, reskilling and upskilling workers and job-seekers will attract investment as it gives the country a pool of skilled workers.

There are auxiliary skills which can be developed or acquired in a relatively short period of time, i.e. one to two months, and which are important in the job application process, e.g. computer classes, language courses, driver's licenses, operating cash tills and switchboards as well as soft skills and world of work readiness. The acquisition of these skills makes job-seekers become job ready fairly quickly, thus ameliorating the 'locking in' effects of training programmes, although this will not solve structural unemployment (Caliendo et al., 2008). The PES can choose to offer this service, or purchase or cause it to be offered or create linkages with other labour market institutions who can offer same.

Stakeholder Interfaces

In the proposed model, strong linkages are recommended between the repertoire of social protection schemes in the country, especially those which cannot be housed under the Single Platform. This will ensure cost effectiveness and promote labour market activation where it is possible. This research also picked up information that points to intra-institution fragmentation, i.e. programmes belonging to the same institution but which operate in silos. With such interfaces, as an example, the unemployment insurance could help a large employer from sinking by providing work sharing arrangements and the requisite wage subsidies for a specified period, by so doing preventing retrenchments. Interfaces make it possible to share information, detect fraud and corruption, e.g. double dipping and avoid duplication of efforts and resources.

Furthermore, interfaces could also include the collection of unemployment insurance contributions by the Receiver of Revenue, to ensure the PESB focusses on labour market interventions. A rehabilitation programme and early return to work of employees injured on duty under the Employees Compensation Act, which is an ALMP can also be administered by the PESB, leaving the Passive Labour Market Policies (PLMP) with social security. Collaboration with Trade and Industry will ensure that the youth, especially artisans are empowered to create jobs for themselves and other. A conducive environment is needed to facilitate the shift of the youth from 'job-seekers to job creators' (Baah-Boateng, 2013).

Modernization of the NIEIS

The NIEIS should be modernized and the capacity of the PESB enhanced to ensure it becomes more sophisticated in order to offer services of value to unskilled and highly skilled job-seekers simultaneously, as well as well as to employers. A modernized NIEIS would be better integrated, interactive and would provide 'real time' labour market information and statistics. If a recipient of unemployment insurance or a social grant suddenly becomes employed or if there is a change in the status of the person on whose

behalf a grant is received, this should be picked up by the NIEIS instantaneously, and such recipient should be removed from receiving such a grant or insurance.

With a strong value proposition, the NIEIS should gain traction, and the majority of job-seekers and vacancies should naturally be registered on the system. This will address a crucial information gap in the labour market as currently the vacancy-to-job-seekers ratio cannot be established statistically in the absence of an effective, up-to-date registration system. It will also position the NIEIS as a central provider of a near perfect picture of the number of active employers, employees and job-seekers as well as their levels of skill.

The new NIEIS should also have a portal through which self-employed artisans and workers could promote their services and obtain jobs e.g. welding, painting, tiling, landscaping and house cleaning, instead of waiting for prospective employers on street corners. The modernized NIEIS should as a first set of services, assess the employability of job-seekers and assist them to access the necessary ALMPs (Caliendo et al., 2008) as a measure to address the structural deficiencies in the labour market and peculiar shortcomings of individual job-seekers.

Passive Labour Market Policies

The absence of income support schemes for unemployed job-seekers in Namibia places a huge burden on job-seekers and further removes them from the labour market. However, a basic scheme of income support is required to cover the cost of transport, photocopies and attending interviews. This would accelerate job seeking efforts. Taking into account the financial hardships in the country, such a scheme could be funded through cross subsidization from such as the contributory unemployment insurance once implemented, and other existing social security schemes.

Successful employment policies owe their effectiveness to the coordination and interaction between labour market programmes and income replacement schemes (Sianesi, 2003). Introducing such a cash transfer will have better redistributive effects, shield unemployed persons from falling into poverty and can give them access to decent

living conditions. van den Heever (2017) argues that without income transfers, countries such as Namibia will continue to experience high levels of poverty and inequality.

Apprenticeships, Internships and Employment Subsidies

It came to the fore from the literature and data collected through this research that apprenticeships and internships play a crucial role in giving inexperienced job seeker a foretaste of the labour market and help align their knowledge to the needs of the employers. Therefore, it is important that this intervention becomes structured and driven from a central point, to bring in equity in access to the labour market as well as to ensure that job-seekers gain valuable skills during their placement. Thus, it is recommended that the Ministry of Labour spearheads the discussion that could lead to the introduction of an ultimately universalized, subsidized internship and apprenticeship programme as well as wage subsidies for employers who employ unemployed job-seekers, especially the long-term unemployed. These incentives should have built-in mechanisms to minimize moral hazards or unintended consequences as a whole.

For the low hanging fruits like unemployed persons who receive grants such as for vulnerable children, budget-balancing subsidies, i.e. subsidies which will not cost the government more than the resulting fall in the government's expenditure on the vulnerable children's grant should be considered (Orszag & Snower, 1999). Then, this subsidy could be rolled out to the youth, i.e. paid to employers of the youth to help off-set the cost of in-service training (Yu, 2013) and then to other vulnerable groups like the long term unemployed, before the subsidy is universalized. The intervention will improve employability of the unemployed. However, there should be targeted active labour market interventions to compliment the subsidies, especially for the hard-to-place job-seekers, lest the intervention results in 'dead-weight'. The stronger the ALMP, the cheaper the cost of administering PLMP in the long run.

Stakeholder Coordination

The Labour Ministry should play an active role in coordinating all national interventions aimed at addressing unemployment or employment creation. It should build lasting relationships with all its identified key stakeholders at various levels, including at parliamentary standing committees level. Its work and results should be what it uses as a value proposition and to build the needed rapport. There should be effective platforms for sharing valuable information on what matters, and the duplication of efforts should be avoided at all cost.

Popularizing Careers in Agriculture

The majority of the youth lives and will continue to live in rural areas, relying on the rural economy, which in Namibia is subsistence agriculture. Paradoxically, the youth has fallen out of love with agriculture, and see it as dirty and demeaning (Girard, 2017).

There is therefore a need for the Labour Ministry to take a lead in creating sustainable decent employment in agriculture. This entails working with strategic partners in agriculture, trade and industry, education, development financing and business development, in order to modernize agriculture, create viable business opportunities and career paths, and improve access to arable land. This will ensure that leaving in rural areas is made a viable option due to improved infrastructure and access to technology and basic services. It will also ensure that agriculture is made appealing to the youth as careers in this sector are given a befitting status and that being a farmer becomes as glamourous as being a business person in any other sector.

Decent Jobs in the Informal Economy

The informal economy continues to grow alongside the formal economy, making it a significant contributor to economic growth, employment and tax revenue. However, its full potential is inhibited by several factors. In the African countries where job growth was experienced, this was predominantly in the informal economy (Baah-Boateng, 2013).

This reality, despite the precarious nature of employment in this sector, calls for targeted interventions to facilitate the creation of decent sustainable jobs for the youth, while gradually working on measures to transition to the formal economy. It is prudent to note that transitioning is a long and complex process, which may or may not be achieved.

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