

*Policy & Other Recommendations to
Address Youth Unemployment in
Jamaica: NEO Technical Proposal III.*



ABOUT NEO INITIATIVE:

NEO¹ is a pioneering initiative in which businesses, governments and civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean have joined forces with a US\$137 million investment to improve the employment opportunities for 1 million youth, half of them women, by 2022. In response to labor market needs, 500,000 youth from 12 countries will be part of NEO by 2018. NEO is an initiative led by the IDB, through its Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) and its Labor Markets Unit (LMK), the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and partners: Arcos Dorados, Caterpillar Foundation, CEMEX, Fondation Forge, Microsoft, SESI and Walmart.

Under the coordination of the Youth Upliftment Through Employment (YUTE) organization, NEO Jamaica is a business, government and civil society partnership to strengthening public actor dialogue around youth training and employment. They work together to develop successful models, seek synergies between programs and align objectives and impact to build a more effective national training and employment system.

The NEO Jamaica partnership was formed voluntarily by the following institutions: Planning Institute of Jamaica; Ministry of Labour and Social Security; Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture; National Youth Service; Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology, Energy; HEART; The Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica; The D&G Foundation/Red Stripe; CEMEX; the MultiCare Youth Foundation (formerly Youth Upliftment Through Employment); and The University of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

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A Common Metric System and an Institutional Framework for Youth Employment in Jamaica: NEO Technical Proposals, was developed by Sophia Whyte-Givans, Technical Consultant participant in the New Employment Opportunities Task Force in Jamaica

The opinions expressed in this publication are exclusively those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the perspective of the IDB, its Board of Executive Directors, or the countries it represents. Nor do they necessarily reflect the point of view of the MIF, IYF, NEO's corporate partners or NEO Jamaica Alliance.

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¹ www.youthneo.org

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

CCPA	Child Care and Protection Act
CMS	Common Metric System
ETC	Employment Tax Credit
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
HEART	Human Employment and Resource Training
LFM	Log Frame Matrix
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MEYI	Ministry of Education, Youth and Information
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
NEI	National Education Inspectorate
NEO	New Employment Opportunities
NEO-Jamaica	New Employment Opportunities for Youth in Jamaica
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RTOs	Registered Training Organizations
STATIN	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
STW	Steps-to-Work
TAFEs	Technical and Further Education Institutions
TRN	Taxpayer Registration Number
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WPS	Wages & Productivity Survey
YICs	Youth Information Centres

Executive Summary

Technical Proposal 3 is the third in a series of technical proposals on youth employment and employability. Technical Proposals 1 and 2 introduced the common metric system and high-level institutional framework, respectively. Technical Proposal 3 presents recommendations arising from both technical proposals, particularly from the literature review. The argument of Technical Proposal 3 is that youth unemployment requires a coordinated and systematic effort if this seemingly intractable problem is to be ameliorated. The main proposal is the introduction of a National Apprenticeship Program that goes way beyond the scope of the Registered Apprenticeship Program that Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust National Training Agency (NTA) currently administers.

Youth unemployment is a national, regional and global problem. The problem is exacerbated by a mismatch between the skills demanded by the labour market and those supplied. Youth unemployment is closely linked to other socio-economic challenges such as poverty, informality and crime. Over the past two decades, governments in the region have implemented active labour market policies and other interventions, some through the support of multilateral financial institutions (MFIs), to create opportunities in the labour market to address excess supply.

The proposal is not just to introduce such a system but to ensure that it is sensitive to the needs of employers and industries and also has the support of employers as far as providing apprenticeships and, eventually, gainful employment. Six Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries that have successful and strong VET systems are used to make the argument that strong VETs deliver youth employment. Strong VET systems recognize that youth should “learn to work” and that they require mentoring and training to develop into the adult employees that the labour force demands. In other words, youth are not adults; in some countries youth are treated as a special constituent deserving of certain types of support. Such countries view youth as being at a disadvantage. Even more worrisome are at-risk youth. Some countries provide special incentives to employers to hire or take on at-risk youth as apprentices and provide either youth guarantees where youth are employed, or mutual obligation agreements where at-risk youth receive income support if they meet their commitments, as agreed in the contract among the state, the employer and the youth.

This report is divided into four sections: **Section 1** presents the Introduction which introduces the prevailing policy context as articulated by the National Youth Policy. The introduction segues into why a strong VET system inclusive of a National Apprenticeship system has merit.

Section 2 provides a Literature Review that draws almost exclusively from Hoffman (2011) *Schooling in the Workplace*. The review emphasizes the OECD as an example to follow, for long-term and sustainable youth employment gains; features of strong VET systems; advocated for codifying VET in law, further than what exists in the HEART Trust Act; explores VET models; highlights two main policy options used by strong VET countries; the benefits of a strong VET system as well as one particular weakness common to both strong and weak VET systems – the ineffectiveness of career guidance and counselling in guiding youth. The Summary establishes that the Literature Review supports the policy and other recommendations made in this proposal and explains why the better option is to look towards Europe and Australia as opposed to Latin America for a solution.

Section 3 outlines 22 proposals organized per the intervention-type: policy, legislative, research and analysis, data collection/statistics, governance, capacity building, testing, monitoring and evaluation, access to information and budgeting.

- 8 policy interventions
- 2 legislative interventions
- 4 research and analysis interventions
- 2 data collection/ statistics interventions
- 1 governance intervention
- 1 capacity building interventions
- 1 testing intervention
- 1 monitoring and evaluation intervention
- 1 access to information intervention
- 1 budgeting intervention

In **Section 4**, the Conclusion, the value of a strong VET and National Apprenticeship System are reiterated. The argument is made that what Jamaican need is to be employable and to gain meaningful employment that allows them to have a satisfactory quality of life. It emphasizes that the National Apprenticeship Program will not solve all of youth's social and economic problems but it can make a difference. Youth unemployment requires an appropriate governance mechanism to ensure that it is given priority and is not subsumed under other national issues. Most importantly, it requires consensus on the part of the Government and employers that it is a problem that is worth addressing and, a commitment on the part of both to invest in youth.

I. Introduction

The Government of Jamaica (GOJ) and the private sector must take a policy stance that youth unemployment is everyone's problem. A social compact is needed whereby employers play their role in providing apprenticeships and, eventually jobs, using the HEART Trust or any other designated entities as conduits. The countries that have implemented this most successfully have legislated this contract between the state, the employers and youth. It is this social compact or pact of mutual responsibility that has positively impacted youth employment outcomes in countries such as Australia, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland.

The National Youth Policy (2015) listed some key actions that were needed to give effect to enhanced youth outcomes. The Policy called for: an Implementation Plan, Strategic Plan and Action Plan within one year of the Policy being promulgated; one national entity for youth development within two years; and a Youth Development Act and related empowering legislation within four years². Notwithstanding, these indicative measures, there is need for specific policy and legislative interventions to address the high national youth unemployment rates. The reduction of youth unemployment requires a multi-sectoral approach involving mainly the Ministries of Education, Youth and Information (MoEYI) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS), the private sector and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It requires committed leadership. The Netherlands has demonstrated its commitment through a Youth Unemployment Task Force which has produced and is executing a Youth Unemployment Action Plan³.

Policies to impact youth unemployment and place more youth in meaningful jobs, earning living wages must also coerce the kind of behaviours that employers demand. In other words, policies must be aligned not only to the outcomes and impact for both the education sector and the labour market but also the inputs. Policy formulation that is aligned to each stage of the process of achieving a reduction in unemployment must be structured and systematic. If this is not the approach, then the intended outcomes and impact will not materialize.

A strong vocational education and training (VET) system, including a National Apprenticeship program that is a tri-partite commitment, could significantly reduce youth unemployment in Jamaica and contribute to sustainable economic growth. The premise of this argument is that the main interventions should start at age 15, before youth start the transition to the world of work, for there to be long-term benefit. Youth should “learn to work”. Additional and more differentiated interventions and support will have to target those already in the labour force.

² Government of Jamaica. Ministry of Youth and Culture. 2015. National Youth Policy 2015 – 2030 (Green Paper): p. 60.

³ Hoffman, Nancy. 2011. *Schooling in the Workplace: How Six of the World’s Best Vocational Education Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life*. Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, MA: p. 160.

II. Literature Review

Looking to the OECD for Guidance

Technical Proposal 3 is heavily influenced by Hoffman's (2011) *Schooling in the Workplace* which reviewed successful VET systems. This is because Technical Proposals 1 and 2 pointed to the need to improve educational and training outcomes. While Hoffman's publication is a wake-up call to the United States, and by extension the United Kingdom, which have fallen behind due to the emphasis on 'college for all', it is useful for Jamaica. Hoffman concluded that the United States could greatly benefit from the experience of six countries - Australia, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. These countries have low youth unemployment rates (below 10% compared to the world average of 40%) which can be directly attributed to strong VET systems.

Hoffman (2011) identifies the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as an important indicator of readiness to enter the world of work. "One important distinction of PISA is that it asks young people to apply their knowledge, and so it is a better indicator of readiness for the demands of the workplace and challenging post-secondary schooling than the more traditional discipline-based test of context"⁴. In the six countries studied, youth are supported to attain higher academic achievements and to remain in school and the transition from school to work (STW) is structured so that the transition is smooth. These countries converge with respect to the philosophical basis for VET: "to support the development of teenagers are they transition from school into the world of work that will occupy and define their adult lives"⁵.

Strong VET Systems

Countries with very strong VET systems share two distinct characteristics:

- They have special youth policies: they see the younger generations as important to support, protect, and engage with as an investment in future prosperity.
- In partnership with employers and unions, they educate from 40 percent to 75 percent of their young people in a vocational education system that links education and labor market needs and includes substantial learning in the workplace⁶.

These countries have a different orientation. These countries have recognized that the way learning takes place must change if we are to make youth employable. "The school is not the centre of the world; it is just a service-providing institution that should meet the client's needs"⁷. As such, the end point of education and training is employability and not necessarily a college degree⁸. In these countries, there has been experimentation, for example inviting select employers to help design a curriculum to facilitate transition to work in their respective establishments. This is a feature of strong VET systems – the state is proactive.

⁴ Hoffman, Nancy. 2011. *Schooling in the Workplace: How Six of the World's Best Vocational Education Systems Prepare Young People for Jobs and Life*. Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, MA; p. 4.

⁵ Hoffman 2011: p. 24.

⁶ Hoffman 2011: p. 4.

⁷ Hoffman 2011: p. 115.

⁸ Hoffman 2011: pp. 6, 7.

The key factors that comprise a “strong VET system” are:

- The system is formed through public/private partnerships between the state, schools, employers and labor unions.
- Employers have a major role, usually codified in a legal framework, in defining the qualifications required for clusters of occupations in their sectors of the economy.
- With support from organizations representing their occupational sector, employers take responsibility for building curriculum and developing and carrying out assessments.
- With employer participation, a government education agency usually at the national level is responsible for standardization of the system and for quality control and improvement⁹.”

What distinguishes OECD countries with strong VET systems contrasts strongly with the United States and with Jamaica. These countries have learnt the value of VET and are strengthening the existing systems in the following way:

- adding more apprenticeship opportunities;
- re-tooling curriculum to better match labor market needs;
- adding high-tech postsecondary pathways; and
- engaging at-risk young people in integrated work and learning programs through “youth guarantees” and “mutual obligation” policies¹⁰.

Admittedly, most of these countries have financial resources that are not at the disposal of the Jamaican government.

Korea, England and France are just a few of the countries revisiting the merit of a longstanding college-for-all strategy. Korea and England are adding more post-secondary career oriented options with work-based learning requirements. They are reinvesting or expanding upper secondary pathways that include apprenticeships and training schemes in high-demand occupations¹¹. France is also seeking to “build stronger apprenticeship opportunities since youth unemployment is very high and apprenticeship is through to ease the transition into permanent employment”¹².

European Union (EU) countries have national qualification systems. The EU defines qualification as: “the final outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment and validation process obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work¹³.” In the Netherlands, in particular, “attitudes” are an official element in the national qualification system¹⁴ and the social partners, through sector-based national committees, are the drivers in producing the qualifications¹⁵. In Australia, industry defines the qualifications, as well, and VET competencies represent approximately 80 percent of all occupations¹⁶.

⁹ Hoffman 2011: p. 10.

¹⁰ Hoffman 2011: p. 15.

¹¹ Hoffman 2011: p. 15.

¹² Hoffman 2011: 9. 36.

¹³ Hoffman 2011: p. 25.

¹⁴ Hoffman 2011: p. 26.

¹⁵ Hoffman 2011: p. 32.

¹⁶ Hoffman 2011: p. 49.

Codifying VET in Law

In the six countries studied, VET is codified in law. In Norway, there is no distinction between general education and vocational education so the same Acts regulate both¹⁷. Denmark, Germany, Finland and Norway have a legal basis on which to engage employers to provide work-based education for youth. Jamaica has its HEART Trust Act but this Act does not codify VET in law as an obligation of the private sector to provide apprenticeships or employment.

The HEART Trust Act specifies the functions of the HEART Trust in Section 4.–(1) with respect to training, certification, placement, accreditation of other training institutions but it does not provide for a National Apprenticeship program codified in law. HEART does, however, have a Registered Apprenticeship Program but there is no legal mandate for private sector entities to comply, other than the contributions provided for in Section 15 – General regulations as to payment and collection of contributions; Section 25- (7) - Regulations, the Third Schedule, the Human Employment and Training (Contributions) Regulations, 1982 which also prescribe how “offsetting the tax against stipends paid to trainees” (see Section 13 – relief for emoluments paid to trainees, as well) should be treated with. The HEART Act is the best instrument to give legal status to a National Apprenticeship System.

In the Netherlands, the Adult Education and Vocational Education Act of 1996 (referred to by the Dutch acronym WEB) goes beyond just placement or employment to portability: it required that “qualifications be portable, broad and flexible”¹⁸.

VET Models

There are three models for VET systems. These are the:

1. Market model e.g. England’s model – match between skills and training is left to the market
2. School model e.g. United States, France, Korea, Sweden, Hungary – employers are not leveraged; they are the “prospective consumers” of prepared students.
3. State-directed model e.g. Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Norway and the Netherlands – strong VET or dual-system with a social pact to address STW transition and youth employment¹⁹.

Jamaica has a state-directed model. In this model, the state establishes the legal framework, for example, the HEART Trust Act. In strong VET countries, there is a tripartite governance structure consisting of: “(1) the representative bodies established by the social partners (employers and unions), (2) the state (ministries, education boards at national and regional levels), and (3) VET providers (schools, state or regional entities)”²⁰.

The existence of a strong institutional and legal framework for apprenticeships has been singled out as the most important condition for the successful implementation of apprenticeship training²¹: “it sets out the roles of all stakeholders, the qualifications for teachers and trainers, the way VET is assessed, / and

¹⁷ Hoffman 2011: p. 33.

¹⁸ Hoffman 2011: p. 92.

¹⁹ Hoffman 2011: p. 92.

²⁰ Hoffman 2011: p. 69.

²¹ Hoffman 2011: p. 74, 77.

how quality is controlled. Such a legal document leaves little ambiguity about decision making and power sharing in specific realms²².

In the countries studied, there is use of intermediaries. Intermediaries are labour market brokers who straddle the line between the education and training sector and the labour market. They facilitate and accommodate the transition from school to work. In Jamaica's case, HEART Trust functions as an intermediary.

The driving purpose of intermediaries is to ensure that apprentices and trainees attain the appropriate qualifications for each legally defined occupation, working with, and on behalf of, the member companies they represent. The qualifications represent the employers' statements of required learning outcomes and provide a roadmap for all training. Intermediaries usually have statutory authority for particular aspects of VET. As go-between organizations, they may do any or all of the following: find apprenticeship workplaces, provide orientation for young people starting apprenticeships, execute contracts between employers and apprentices, provide general training in the basics of a career area, develop curriculum, carry out assessments in partnership with educators, and represent their occupation or sector in the development and validation of qualifications²³.

However, based on the expanded role of intermediaries, there is scope for HEART Trust to take on the additional roles beyond what it currently does. In terms of the areas which are more industry-specific which HEART Trust does not provide or which it is not cost-effective to provide, HEART Trust can provide accreditation for firms which wish to pursue their own training programs through non-HEART intermediaries.

In Australia, the intermediaries are technical and further education institutions called TAFEs which implement the VET training system. There are also over 4,000 registered training organizations (RTOs). "The Australian National Training Authority (NTA) defines RTOs as intermediaries that function as "training brokers and facilitators" and as the "frontline" of VET, serving to translate industry needs "into client focused training and assessment", which the organizations provide to their clients"²⁴. Australian airline, Qantas, became an RTO in order to qualify to train its own employees²⁵.

The state-directed model has worked for the countries with strong VET systems. The main lessons learned relate to how to make apprenticeships work. Norway has a 2 plus 2 system: 2 years post-secondary schooling followed by 2 years of apprenticeship. The lesson from Norway is that the model works because "students become more invested in apprenticeship systems that integrate work and learning from the start"²⁶.

Germany provides several lessons. The first is that "from late adolescence onward, most young people learn best in structured programs that combine work and learning"²⁷. In other words, "academic skills are best developed not by being taught separately but through embedding them in the presentations of

²² Hoffman 2011: pp. 69 – 70.

²³ Hoffman 2011: p. 77.

²⁴ Hoffman 2011: p. 81.

²⁵ Hoffman 2011: p. 84

²⁶ Hoffman 2011: p. 89.

²⁷ Hoffman 2011: p. 104.

complex workplace problems that students are expected to solve in the course of their part-time schooling”²⁸. The second lesson is that supervisors of apprentices or workforce trainers require training as a “guarantee of minimum standards”²⁹. The evidence while very strong for Germany was common to some other countries. “Evidence from various countries suggest that when apprentice supervisors receive specific training, they do a better job of developing the skills of apprentices”³⁰. These supervisors and trainers must play a mentorship role to minimize apprentice dropout rates and to enhance apprentice performance.

In Australia, Switzerland and the Netherlands, an innovation called apprenticeship barometers are used to regulate the supply of and demand for apprentices through public reporting of information quarterly³¹. “Barometers report the number of apprenticeships open, changes in openings, and such data is completion by field, withdrawals and qualifications received. The data can inform students, training developers, and providers, as well as warn a government that incentives for employer participation need adjusting”³². The apprenticeship barometer is a function that the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) can take on if a National Apprenticeship System is implemented. If the common metric system (CMS) is functioning as it ought to, this information would also flow to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN).

Main Policy Options for VET

Hoffman found that, in Europe, as in the United States and Latin America, employers became disgruntled with the quality of skill sets being produced by training. In Switzerland, this is what led to the reform of VET. Employers wanted youth who could be “autonomous decision makers and problem solvers and who could reflect on their learning and self-correct”³³.

There are two main youth policy options that strong VET countries use:

1. Youth guarantees- this ensures that young people up to a certain age are entitled to a job apprenticeship or other education within a certain time-frame.
2. Mutual obligation policies [Compact of young people-families-government]- “activation” policies on arguments that young people will seek jobs stay in training, etc. in exchange for income support, etc. If young do not keep their side of the bargain, they lost the support³⁴.

The Austrian Government subsidizes those companies that provide training slots for young persons through youth guarantees³⁵. The Australian Government has a “mutual obligation” policy and a young person can get a Youth Allowance, or the family get a family Tax Benefit once there is compliance³⁶. Given the fiscal constraints that Jamaica faces, youth guarantees codified in law appears to be the more feasible option to guarantee youth employment via the mechanism of apprenticeship.

²⁸ Hoffman 2011: p. 103.

²⁹ Hoffman 2011: p. 130.

³⁰ Hoffman 2011: p. 129.

³¹ Hoffman 2011: p. 97.

³² Ibid

³³ Hoffman 2011: p. 117.

³⁴ Hoffman 2011: p. 151.

³⁵ Hoffman 2011: p. 156.

³⁶ Hoffman 2011: p. 154.

Benefits of A Strong VET System

Countries that have strong VET systems and which continue to invest in these systems must do so for a reason. The benefits are system-wide. The country benefits; the employers benefit; youth benefit. Countries which have implemented the VET strategy have much higher secondary completion rates and have experienced greater success in keeping youth unemployment low than in non-apprenticeship or weak VET countries. These countries have also succeeded in transitioning young qualified person with skills that have been certified or recognized into the labor market³⁷. From the perspective of the employer, internships and apprenticeships facilitate screening of workers over time prior to any offer of full or regular employment³⁸.

Strong VET countries have implemented universal youth employment programs through the pathway of VET and have found mechanisms to target at-risk youth through income support and other social protection support³⁹. The Netherlands has a Youth Care Act (2005) focused on at-risk youth⁴⁰. The use of a unique Education number for each student has been very useful in tracking all students. Switzerland has a case management system that is used to target and provide support for at-risk youth, who represent 2 to 3 percent of young people. "Case managers identify at-risk students in the second year of lower secondary and stay with them to and through the completion of a VET program"⁴¹.

Hoffman found that in contrast to the six countries studied, the United States is weak on career guidance. "No one helps them relate their work to their programs of study"⁴². This is also a weakness in Jamaica which presents a policy proposal for a reform of the guidance and counselling curriculum. Surprisingly, even in good VET systems, intensive career guidance and counselling is among the weakest areas⁴³.

³⁷ Hoffman 2011: p. 43, 48, 52.

³⁸ Hoffman 2011: p. 47, 134, 138.

³⁹ Hoffman 2011: p. 150.

⁴⁰ Hoffman 2011: p. 158.

⁴¹ Hoffman 2011: p. 163, 164.

⁴² Hoffman 2011: p. 68.

⁴³ Hoffman 2011: p. 151.

Summary

This Technical Proposal focuses on the merits of a National Apprenticeship System. While there have been various active labour market policies implemented throughout LAC, the benefits, as far as the evaluations conducted, have not proven conclusively that these interventions have been entrenched. For this reason, it is recommended that the Jamaican government looks towards Europe and Australia to strong VET countries where apprenticeship has worked and has resulted in these countries boasting world-leading low youth unemployment rates. Our National Universities can also support apprenticeship. Northeastern University has a co-op program which is over-subscribed. Each student does at least one six-month co-op (work experience) in global companies with which the university has forged a partnership. Some graduates do up to 3 six-month co-ops. “Nearly two-thirds of co-op students are offered jobs with their co-op employers upon graduation”⁴⁴. For a National Apprenticeship to work, there must be a social partnership where employers are engaged and see the value of the system. The system also requires effective career guidance and counselling which is sorely lacking in Jamaica.

⁴⁴ Hoffman 2011: p. 174.

III. Policy & Other Recommendations

The recommendations are arranged according to the intervention area. These are not just policy recommendations, although a majority are. The recommendations demonstrate the need for a multi-faceted approach to youth unemployment. It is not just providing jobs but the preparatory work that leads up to that outcome of youth employment. The various intervention/action areas are: policy, legislative, research and analysis, data collection/statistics, governance, capacity building, testing, monitoring and evaluation, access to information and budgeting.

Policy

1. Revise the National Youth Policy and other relevant policies with a youth emphasis to ensure synergies. Merely cross-referencing policies without implementing measures that are mutually reinforcing undermines youth unemployment and related variables at the impact and outcome levels.
2. Develop a National Youth Employment Policy that would inform the proposed Youth Employment Task Force's Action Plan.
3. Revise the Education Policy to reposition education and training to provide entrants to the labour market with the "right" skills, including soft skills which are increasingly being demanded by employers.
 - There is also an issue with the career guidance provided at the secondary level of education. Guidance counsellors need re-training and re-tooling. There must be greater emphasis on soft or socio-emotional skills in the upper secondary curriculum. Incorporate this "gap" into the revision of the Education Policy and possibly include a phased implementation with a cadre of roving career counsellors to provide support to schools using the MoEYI's regional structure.
4. Expedite use of one identification number to identify students throughout their educational careers – from entry to exit into the labour market to facilitate tracking. Everyone in Jamaica is now required to get a taxpayer registration number (TRN) so this is one option instead of having a plethora of different identification numbers.
5. Implement poverty reduction strategies targeting youth given that youth who are working poor could become adult poor. This could be situated within the National Poverty Reduction Strategy which is currently being revised and is a Green Paper.
6. Design a targeted program for underserved and unattached (vulnerable youth) that incentivizes participation through youth guarantees, preferably, or mutual obligation policies whereby youth are provided with employment or income support, respectively if they complete their training programmes or apprenticeships.
 - This must be linked to strong case management of at-risk youth within the education and training system.

7. To reduce the stigma associated with vocational and technical education (VET), there should be a policy shift in the education and training sector to making VET available to all, students regardless of the intent of some to pursue tertiary education, given the returns to self-efficacy that VET appears to provide.
 - HEART Trust needs to have a representative on the Work Permit Committee to ensure that where capacity is resident Jamaicans are not overlooked. This will also reduce the stigma if HEART is represented and advocating at this high level. It sends a signal to youth that there will be opportunities for them.
8. Review quality, affordable childcare, inclusive of early stimulation, as a factor that could reduce gender disparities in the labour market, potentially through modern labour laws that also integrate recommendations on how youth transition from School to Work (STW). This is a major barrier for women who become pregnant under the age of 25 years.

Legislative

9. Discuss apprenticeship with employers within the context of the National Minimum Wage and the Employment Tax Credit (ETC) to see where the opportunity best exists to accommodate a National Apprenticeship System with a view to extend the Employment Tax Credit (ETC) from 30% of tax liabilities to 40% of tax liabilities, to facilitate apprenticeship. The additional 10% would be earmarked for those who are party to a social contract on apprenticeship.
 - The ETC is an income tax credit granted to an eligible persons, as defined in law, under the Fiscal Incentives (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 2014, through insertion of section 32A (https://www.jamaicatax.gov.jm/documents/10181/106832/employment_tax_credit.pdf/7ad5b343-b122-462b-95c7-7958d99cda78).
 - There would have to be M&E to say that the entity has done this, or that, so that it can qualify for the ETC.
10. Codify VET in law, by repealing the 1957 Apprenticeship Act, preferably through the HEART Trust Act, and establishing a National Apprenticeship System in law and in practice through a social compact of government, employers and youth. The System would accommodate dual vocational programs which combine classroom education and on-the-job training (OJT), leading to employment.
 - The apprenticeship program must include a mentoring component to bridge the divide between a younger and an older generation, especially as youth make the STW transition and are "testing the labour market" to identify an industry or sector more aligned with their interests and their competencies.
 - Include socio-emotional or soft skills as part of the national qualification system.

Research and Analysis

11. Conduct a Wages and Productivity Survey of employers in Jamaica.
12. Improve labour market forecasting significantly. Skill shortages are a result of the disconnect between the education and training systems with the industries (supply vs demand). There

is need for convergence through quality labour market forecasting incorporating the views of the various industries.

13. Procure a study on the Jamaican education system and what it does to either enhance or undermine labour market outcomes.
14. Invest in more research and long-term evaluations in both the education sector and the labour market to result in data-driven education policies that co-ordinate with data-driven labour market policies. Evaluations are expensive but if a cost benefit analysis were to be done, the investment in these evaluations could far outweigh the lost investment from continued implementation of policies that are not producing the desired results.

Data collection/Statistics

15. Reported specifically on the cohort 15 to 24 years to capture youth as defined in the National Youth Policy, and to support compliance with Part 2, Section 34 of the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA). STATIN can continue to report on the age group 25 to 29, as it currently does, to highlight the Government's recognition of the need for this cohort to be similarly targeted as youth.
16. Capture and report on educational level of mothers as this could have a high correlation with other developmental outcomes, as evidenced in other countries, and would be useful for publications such as the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions and the Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, particularly the Education chapter. However, data that is captured must be internationally consistent since this is a global indicator. (This recommendation is linked to (policy) recommendation #8).

Governance

17. Establish a Youth Employment Task Force which consists of government stakeholders, industry representatives, NGOs – essentially a public-private partnerships or social compact – and youth advocacy representatives. The Task Force must be very high level, reporting directly to the Office of the Prime Minister.
 - Implement a Youth Employment Action Plan.

Capacity Building

18. Build the capacity of the Labour Market Information System (LMIS), the Planning Institute of Jamaica, the Statistical Institute of Jamaica and HEART Trust to forecast and to better anticipate skills demands and to co-interact, as well as develop synergies with other institutions to validate data and model outcomes. (This recommendation is linked to (research and analysis) recommendation #12).

Testing

19. Administer the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to Jamaican secondary school students (15 year olds) for the first time, in 2021, to see how Jamaican youth who will be making the STW transition compare in Math, Science and English education.
 - This is a key policy proposal related to the quality of education and should be planned for. This is consistent with a revisiting of the purpose of secondary education so that interventions incorporate the need to be globally competitive.
 - Integrate Work Readiness Certification, offered by the International Youth Federation as a complementary initiative to the academic assessment and explore the synergies with Passport to Success being implemented by the MoEYI.

Monitoring and Evaluation

20. Expand the National Education Inspectorate's (NEI) role to also capture data on the STW transition in terms of not only cognitive but also technical and soft or socio-emotional skills.

Access to Information

21. Consolidate information on youth programs and interventions at one source (one-stop-shop concept) to provide access to information.
 - Many entities are involved in interventions to arrest youth unemployment for youth in general and vulnerable youth, unknown to each other. There is no repository of information for youth to access despite the existence of Youth Information Centres (YICs). There is need to consolidate information at one source; this is the responsibility of the government – to interface with all the players and make the information available to youth in various formats.
 - If YICs are not effective, then the role must be revisited.

Budgeting

22. Implement an annual and medium-term youth budgeting exercise to track expenditure and to inform policy with respect to the outputs of expenditure on youth.

Conclusion

Youth need to be prepared for the world of work. Even university graduates are often asked for experience. A National Apprenticeship Program is a mechanism to help youth transition into the world of work and “learn to work”. There should be no stigma attached. The outcome is employable and employed youth making their contribution to the country through the increased taxes they pay and improved productivity levels. For employers, the benefits are varied. There is a cost but there is the advantage of being able to observe an apprentice work and determine the level of cognitive, technical and socio-emotional skills.

Countries that have strong VET systems have invested in these systems because they recognize the spill-over effects of having youth gainfully occupied in activities that could have very positive long-term effects. Youth who are gainfully occupied have less opportunity to resort to crime or other anti-social activities. They learn responsibility; they develop positive work attitudes and are better prepared for the world of work. A National Apprenticeship Program will not solve all the social and economic problems confronting youth but if it is developed to incorporate mentorship and includes socio-emotional skills as part of the competence-based learning, it can help to mould a generation of youth that are just on the brink of entering the work force as well as those who are in the work force.

A successful VET system requires commitment on the part of all the stakeholders. It may require incentives and it may have to be modified to fit the fiscal circumstances. For at-risk youth who tend to be less employable due to social biases or other factors such as low levels of education or training, employers may need added incentives. It is a discussion that the Government needs to have with employers.

Youth unemployment cannot be tackled in an ad hoc way: Government doing its programs; private sector taking some actions; and NGOs implementing other interventions, in silos. Youth unemployment must be treated with holistically if true gains are to be made and if good practices are to be identified, evaluated and replicated where such interventions are feasible. There is need for an entity dedicated to youth unemployment; that is, addressing youth unemployment is its business and the only business it has. If this is not done, then youth unemployment will get lost in other issues until the statistics come out and the rate incites alarm, the panic fades and then the cycle repeats itself quarterly.

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