

Jobless youth need quick fixes - study

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Policy makers should introduce urgent, short-term interventions to help SA's youth find their way into the labour market, says a paper by university researchers published last month.



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In 2017, only a small number of the more than 700,000 matriculants who finished school last year will find places at university or at one of SA's technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges. Many of those left out of the system will join the 38.2% of people aged between 15 and 34 who were unemployed in the third quarter of 2016.

According to Statistics South Africa, those with an education level below matric contribute 60% of the unemployed, with an unemployment rate of 31.6%.

On the other hand, the unemployment rate among those with tertiary education was 13.2% in the third quarter of last year.

However, the researchers - Lauren Graham, senior researcher at the Centre for Social Development in Africa at the University of Johannesburg, and Ariane De Lannoy, senior researcher at the Poverty and Inequality Initiative at the University of Cape Town - say although youth unemployment is a long-term structural problem, there are steps that can be

taken in the short term to make the search for jobs easier.

In their paper, *Youth Unemployment: What Can We Do in the Short Run?*, published on online debate platform [econ3x3](#), Graham and De Lannoy suggest several interventions.

Rethinking criteria

First, South African employers need to rethink their appointment criteria in order to contribute to the solution.

For instance, a requirement for a cashier might be a matric pass with maths and science as it allows employers to sort matriculants quickly. However, maths and science might not be effective criteria for a cashier who would likely be bored.

"A matriculant with only a good symbol for maths literacy, or even someone without a matric but with some experience in his or her mother's spaza shop, might be better suited," they say.

Employers who escalate the educational requirements for entry-level jobs may be effectively shutting out a large pool of potentially good young employees. Recruitment criteria can be shifted through "impact sourcing", such as that provided by youth incubator Harambee, which identifies talent and prepares youngsters for work.

Transport subsidy

Second, the researchers suggest a transport subsidy to help poor youth look for work. As poor and low-skilled people tend to live far from economic centres such as Johannesburg and Pretoria or on the fringes in townships, travel costs are a deterrent to young job seekers.

A recent national study of participants in a youth employability programme reported that the average transport and other work-seeking costs were about R560 per month while the average per capita household income for the same group of youth was R527 per month.

A transport subsidy for job seekers is being piloted by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab to determine if it would change candidates' jobsearching behaviour.

Contrary to the notion that the youth are lazy and apathetic, Graham and Lannoy say young people in focus groups across six provinces indicated they would be willing to work for wages that were lower than typical minimum wages in various sectors.

Many of them were also willing to take any job that would give them experience or help them pay for university or college fees.

"If SA wishes to enable ... young people to create better lives for themselves and their children, it will have to look into a range of intermediate interventions that will allow more young people to get into jobs in the near future," they conclude.

Source: Business Day