

Youth Unemployment and Joblessness

ADAPT LABOUR STUDIES BOOK-SERIES

International School of Higher Education in Labour and Industrial Relations

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Youth Unemployment and Joblessness:
Causes, Consequences, Responses

Edited by

Alfredo Sánchez-Castañeda, Lavinia Serrani
and Francesca Sperotti

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P U B L I S H I N G

Youth Unemployment and Joblessness:
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This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-4056-4, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4056-9

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FOREWORD

TAYO FASHOYIN

The current global unemployment problem presents a particularly difficult labour market experience for young workers. The ILO estimates no less than 40% of all unemployed people are young. As available knowledge indicates, young people are disadvantaged in finding employment, especially in rigid labour markets. There are several factors, such as their relative lack of skills, unstable labour market experience and discrimination, which contribute to the difficulty usually faced by young people entering the labour market. Thus, unemployment among young people has become a major policy challenge for governments and employers in the 21st century. The fact that during this period countries have to deal with sluggish growth and economic activities has pressured public policy into creating opportunities for economic growth and employment. There is no shortage of ideas and policy initiatives for addressing the daunting challenge of youth employment, but the need for a comprehensive policy approach which combines dedicated strategy for youth employment must also include measures addressing systemic and institutional impediments to the sustainability of policies for the employment of young people. In addition to ensuring that young people stay in school longer, public policies must also create the enabling environment and avenues for skills acquisition and real work experience among young workers. Clearly, there is a strong case for governments and other stakeholders to put in place policies that encourage or motivate employers, particularly in the private sector, to recruit young workers, through various forms of public and private initiatives that are dedicated to the promotion of youth employment. There are many programmes of this kind across countries, but one that has the potential of creating the foregoing enabling environment is the devising of innovative apprenticeship schemes that depart from the traditional apprenticeship, which has proved inadequate in meeting the labour market expectations of prospective employers and young people. The present issue of the ADAPT LABOUR STUDIES BOOK-SERIES, *Youth Unemployment and Joblessness: Causes, Consequences, Responses* is dedicated to the employment challenge facing

young people, but also to the focus and extent of responsiveness of policies, both public and private, in tackling this global challenge of our time. Apart from sharing comparative experiences on policies, practices and trends, the volume seeks to contribute to a wider understanding of the scale of the challenge of youth employment.

UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOBLESSNESS

ALFREDO SÁNCHEZ-CASTAÑEDA,
LAVINIA SERRANI AND FRANCESCA SPEROTTI

For national governments and international organizations worldwide, youth unemployment and joblessness remain major issues. Undoubtedly, the global economic crisis has further exposed the fragility of the youth in the labour market. Between 2008 and 2009, the number of unemployed youth increased by an unprecedented 4.5 million; at the end of 2010, there were an estimated 75.1 million young people in the world struggling to find work – 4.6 million more than in 2007. Moreover, the number of youth who are not in employment, education or training is on the rise in most countries. These alarming trends, alongside recent youth-led political unrest, the persistent lack of job opportunities and ineffective programmes for school-to-work transitions, call for action on the part of political and social institutions at national and international levels.

In an awareness of the seriousness of the foregoing questions and consequences that ensue, the present volume aims to provide some valuable insights into these issues, compiling contributions of academics, researchers and practitioners who participated in the ADAPT-UNAM International Conference, *Youth Unemployment and Joblessness: Causes, Consequences, Responses* which took place on 29-30 August 2011 in Mexico City (Mexico).

The range of solutions provided in this volume is the result of the distinctive features of each national geopolitical context, but also of the interdisciplinary approach through which these topics are analyzed. Indeed, given the undergoing changes in the world of work, youth unemployment and joblessness are issues to be dealt with by different subjects such as economics, labour law, education, sociology and industrial relations. However, the set of proposals put forward does not imply the absence of shared views. On the contrary, there is broad consensus on the urgent need of investing in training and skills development as the

main levers to fight unemployment and overcome the current mismatch in the labour market.

Equal attention should be paid to the shift from education to work, which in many countries proved to be a complex process, affected by variables such as the length and quality of the education received, national traditions, the state of the labour market, and economic and demographic issues. In considering different flexible forms of work, apprenticeship appears to be one of the most effective tools for ensuring a successful transition, and also the integration between education, training, and employment. Indeed, apprenticeship provides for a win-win solution: securing the transition towards employment for young people with appropriate skills, as it is up to the employer to train young workers, while eventually reducing labour costs. Such a reduction in labour costs is another positive effect for employers and not necessarily a direct consequence of training.

In view of the above, the set of proposals examined in the present volume is intended to gain a better understanding of the causes and the consequences of youth unemployment and joblessness, and to disseminate the main findings discussed over the ADAPT-UNAM International Conference.