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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WORKPLACE BASED LEARNING AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN AFRICA

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Workplace-based learning refers to practical or on-the-job training that is usually provided through an apprenticeship, internship, learnership, work placement or other practical training component of a vocational education or training programme (Cornyn & Brewer, 2018). **The primary conduits for workplace-based learning in Africa are: (1) technical and vocational education (TVET) provided or regulated by national governments and (2) informal or traditional apprenticeships.** In addition, some donor-funded skills development programmes have a component of on-the-job training. These forms of workplace-based learning co-exist in many African countries, and not regarded as substitutes or complements.

In general, **there are patchy statistics on TVET and informal or traditional apprenticeships.** However, there is broad consensus that **there are fewer opportunities for TVET; and that the informal or traditional apprenticeship system is the main source of workplace-based learning for young Africans** (Adams et al., 2013; Fox & Filmer, 2014). Donor funded skills development programmes vary considerably in terms of duration, scope and objectives. Therefore, it is difficult to compare these programmes or reach consensus on their overall impact on employment (McKensie, 2017; Datta, 2018).

Most African countries offer TVET at secondary and/or tertiary level. African governments regulate TVET, usually through one or more ministries or government agencies. Both public and private sector training providers offer TVET. Many African countries include an internship or other component of workplace-based learning as part of the TVET curricula. **Women have less access to TVET** (Filmer & Fox, 2014) **and young people in lower socio-economic categories or with less education are less likely to participate in TVET** (Adams et al., 2013; Filmer & Fox, 2014; Sorensen et al., 2017).

A key finding is that **there is little difference in terms of how TVET operates across middle-income and low-income countries.** In general, **TVET is underfunded and is a low priority for African governments.** TVET systems in Africa are hampered by the poor quality of training facilities, trainers, equipment and curricula (Sorensen et al., 2017; Andreoni, 2018; Leyaro & Joseph, 2019). Moreover, linkages with employers, especially in the private sector, are weak and this undermines the scope for TVET to bridge the supply and demand for skills (Oviawe, 2018; Sorensen et al., 2017). However, **evaluations of African TVET systems concur that they could play an important role in addressing youth employment, if they were reformed, adequately funded and well managed** (Adams et al., 2013; Krishan & Shaorshadze, 2013; Alvarez-Galvin, 2015; Akoojee, 2016; Sorensen et al., 2017; Leyaro & Joseph, 2019).

Key recommendations for improving TVET in Africa:

The following recommendations are offered for improving TVET in Africa:

- **Improve general secondary education** as problems with literacy hinders the progress of TVET students;
- **Investment is required** to overcome the curricula and infrastructure weaknesses among TVET providers;
- **Capacity building is needed** to address the shortcomings in the public institutions that regulate and manage the TVET systems; and
- It is necessary to **upgrade TVET facilities, provide new and modern equipment and enhance the skills of trainers.**

There is little difference in the informal or traditional apprenticeship system across middle-income and low-income countries. In most cases, young people become apprentices to master-craftspersons. The apprentice often pays for the training but they may receive food or accommodation in return (Fox & Filmer, 2014). **Women have less access to informal apprenticeships** (Filmer & Fox, 2014) **and their participation is skewed towards trades that are traditionally associated with females, such as hairdressing, tailoring and beauty services** (Aggarwal, 2013; Schraven, 2013; Sorensen et al., 2017).

Informal or traditional apprenticeships are generally regulated through social contracts, which cannot always protect apprentices from exploitation. Some common problems are child labour, hazardous working conditions and long hours. In addition, **the quality of on-the-job training varies** because of the limited range of skills in some trades, outdated technology, inadequate equipment and limited skills among the master craftpersons (Axmann & Hoffman, 2013; Fayobi et al., 2017). **Informal or traditional apprenticeship systems should be upgraded** in order to provide better quality training and improve working conditions for apprentices (ILO, 2012).

Key recommendations for upgrading informal apprenticeships in Africa:

The following recommendations are offered for upgrading informal apprenticeships.

- **Improve general secondary education** as problems with literacy undermines the progress of traditional or informal apprentices;
- **Develop standards for skills acquired in the informal apprenticeship system and monitor** the acquisition of skills using logbooks, skills testing and certification of trainers;
- **Provide capacity building for master craftpersons** through training-the-trainers programmes and providing access to modern equipment;
- **Promote contracts which protect apprentices from exploitation;**
- **Promote access for women to trades where they are largely excluded, and provide subsidies or other incentives to encourage master craftpersons to recruit female apprentices** in trades that are dominated by men;
- **Adopt recognition of prior learning** as a means for certifying skills learned in the informal sector (Palmer, 2020) and facilitating possible transition to the formal sector; and
- **Further research is required to clarify the term “master craftperson”** and to break down the category further, so that differences in their skills and resources are better understood. In addition, **research that takes account of the views and needs of master craftpersons** is essential to ensure that interventions and policies are not top-down.

The broader literature on youth employment and skills development distinguishes between supply side versus demand-side interventions (Fox & Kaul, 2016; McKensie, 2017; Datta et al., 2018). Supply-side interventions focus on improving skills through training (class-room based and/or on-the job) or incentives which either encourage young people to find employment or enable employers to hire young workers. Demand-side interventions focus on improving the capacity of employers or industrial sectors so that there will be higher demand for workers (McKenzie, 2017).

Workplace-based learning may be more effective if it is part of broader interventions, which address the demand-side constraints on youth employment. Initiatives to improve workplace-based learning should be part of an economic development strategy (Andreoni, 2018; Biavaschi et al., 2012; Sorensen et al., 2017) which aims to develop particular sectors of the economy. Workplace-based learning can develop the skills that these priority sectors require in the future. A better understanding of how the proposed key sectors relate to the informal sector is critical.

The private sector is touted as an avenue for expanding workplace-based learning, but the formal private sector in Africa is small (Ayele et al., 2018). However, case study evidence from Tunisia and Tanzania suggests that **public private partnerships may be viable for promoting the scale and scope of workplace-based learning** (Sorensen et al., 2017; Andreoni, 2018).

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About INCLUDE

INCLUDE was conceived in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote evidence-based policymaking for inclusive development in Africa through research, knowledge sharing and policy dialogue. INCLUDE brings together researchers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and governments to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better research-policy linkages for inclusive development in Africa. Since its establishment, INCLUDE has supported more than 20 international research groups to conduct research on inclusive development and facilitated policy dialogues in Africa and the Netherlands.