



Easing school to work transitions in Benin

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Key messages

- Youth employment interventions should be reoriented to promote labour market experience alongside education, rather than after high school graduation.
- Additional measures are needed to support young women who wish to enter the labour market.
- Working while studying is found to reduce the duration of the transition period for men and for youth who have graduated from secondary school.

Youth struggle to find jobs after leaving school

It can take up to four years after leaving school for young people in Benin to find their first job (School-to-Work Transition Survey, INSAE 2014).

In 2012, over 42% of youth spent more than a year looking for work, and in 2014, only 11% of 15 to 29 year-olds had completed their transition to the labour market (INSAE).

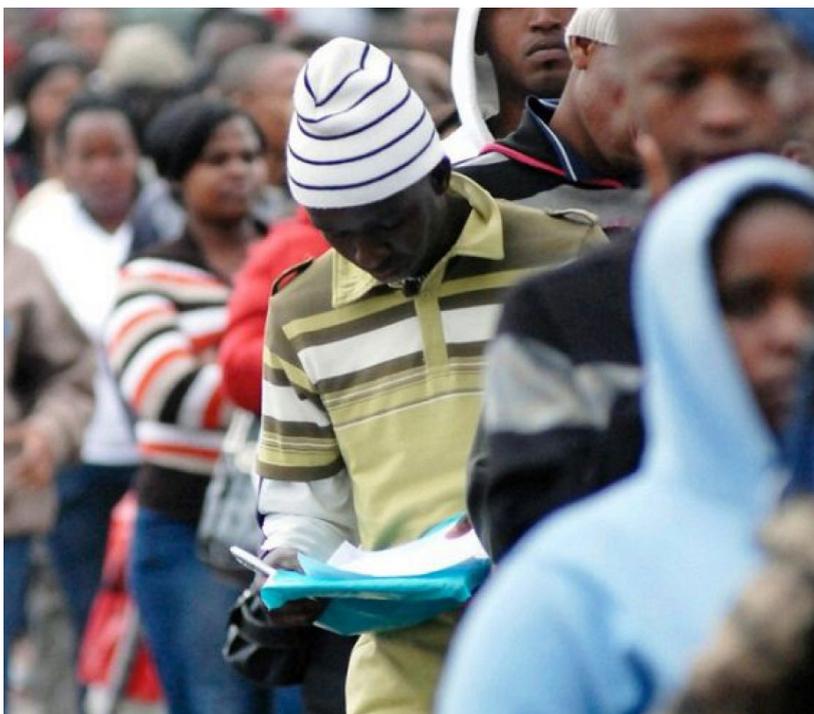
Policies to reduce youth unemployment remain limited

Since 2007, the Government of Benin has been attempting to reduce youth unemployment.

Initiatives include providing young people with entrepreneurship education and work experience through the activities of the *Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi* (National Employment Agency) and the *Fonds National de Promotion de l'Entreprise et de l'Emploi des Jeunes* (National Fund to Promote Enterprise and Youth Employment).

However, these interventions remain limited, are generally for people who have finished school, and their effects are not yet clearly known.

The School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS) identifies the main obstacles to youth employment in Benin as a lack of vocational and technical education, professional experience, and job search assistance.



The analysis

A team of local researchers sought to **investigate whether working before leaving school can help youth transition more easily into Benin's labour market**. In particular, the team aimed to analyse the effect of experience in the labour market while studying on the length of the students' transition to their first job.

To do so, the researchers used a multi-equation model within the counterfactual framework to evaluate nationally representative data from the SWTS for 15 to 29 year-olds in Benin.

"Working while studying" was defined as work undertaken by students during and/or outside of the school season (evenings/weekends and holidays, respectively).

Key findings

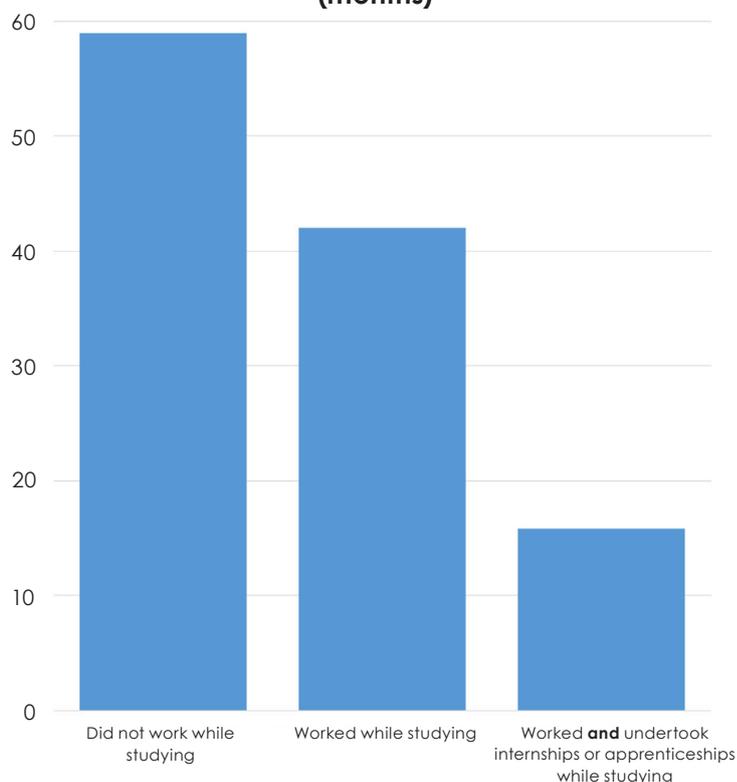
The team's results indicate that **working while studying eases the school-to-work transition**. Compared to students who did not work, those who worked in the labour market while studying were found to have a shorter transition period. In particular, the team found that working while studying significantly reduces the transition spell:

- For youth who left school with at least a secondary education.
- For men. It was not found to make a difference in the duration of women's transition periods.
- If the work is undertaken only during the summer break or holidays (not evenings and weekends during the school year).

Additionally:

- **The transition spell is further reduced when working-while-studying experiences are combined with apprenticeships.**

School-to-work transition durations for youth in Benin (months)



Conclusions

The findings highlight the importance of acquiring work experience while at school and suggest that **youth who work while studying may acquire skills that are attractive to future employers**, thus decreasing their transition period.

That these findings are only true for men could indicate that the economic activities performed by men while in education are more propitious to their transition to work.

However, it may also indicate that the local environment values men with work experience more than women with work experience.

Experience in the labour market is, however, not sufficient to ease the post-school transition. The findings indicate that **it must be coupled with at least a certain level of education for the experience to help youth find their first job**

Policy messages

Current interventions to reduce youth unemployment should be reoriented or extended to promote or encourage labour market experience while studying, rather than after graduation.

Examples could include:

- Integrating entrepreneurship and business skills training into secondary education
- Promoting temporary (summer) employment opportunities for students

Further research is needed on how to extend the benefits of work experience programmes to women and reduce women's labour market constraints. Without measures that aim to address the gender employment gap, interventions intended to boost youth employment may also increase the gap.

This brief summarizes outcomes from [PMMA-20083](#) supported under the PAGE II initiative (2016-2020). To find out more about the research methods and findings, read the full paper, published as part of the [PEP working paper series](#).

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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of PEP.

Reference

Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique (INSAE). *School-to-Work Transition Survey* 2014. Cotonou, Bénin