



Improving job matching for Zambia's youth

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Key messages

- Programs that promote working while studying should provide additional support such as career guidance, pre-placement training and conditional financial support to encourage job matching.
- Students who find work related to their area of study benefit from better job matching after graduation
 - Work in unrelated fields may be detrimental to education without improving job matching prospects

Zambian youth struggle to find suitable work

Zambia's average youth unemployment rate (17.4% in 2017) is much higher than national unemployment rates (12.6%)¹.

Of the youth who are employed, only about 55% have jobs that match their level of education. A significant share (45%) of employed youth are either undereducated or overeducated for the positions that they hold¹.

The challenge of the educational mismatch among young people entering the labour market—i.e., where their level of education or qualification is more or less than that required for a job—is closely linked to the high rate of youth unemployment.

With the gradual increase in college and university graduates, coupled with a low absorption rate in the labour market, youth in Zambia have little choice but to accept jobs for which they are over-qualified.

Measures to improve job-matching

The Zambian government has implemented higher (tertiary) education sector reforms, such as a Work-Based learning Framework developed in 2017 to bridge education and skills mismatch. By focusing on pre-graduation work exposure through apprenticeships and post-graduation work exposure in internships, the program aims to complement the training youth received in colleges and universities.

A team of local PEP researchers sought to investigate the effect of pre-graduation work experience on educational mismatch in Zambia.



Photo: Doug Badcock

The analysis

To measure educational mismatch, the research team analysed nationally-representative cross-sectional survey data from the 2014 School to Work Transition Survey (STWTS)² for youth aged 15 to 29.

The team examined whether there are differences between the subjective (self-reported survey) and empirical (computed based on average education in a given occupation) effects of working while studying, through which they also verified the robustness of their results.

To estimate the causal effect of working while studying on educational mismatch, the researchers used a range of Extended Ordered Probit regression models, taking into account possible self-selection and sample-selection biases, and controls for youth characteristics.

Working-while-studying for future job matching

Empirical literature suggests that exposing young people to the work environment while they are still studying can help them acquire the necessary skills that can enhance their chances of being better matched for a job. Pre-graduation work experience or “working while studying” has the potential to provide students with a shorter school-to-work transition as they acquire specific labour market skills, networks, career-goal guidance and aspirations.

Key findings

Students with experience of working while studying are more likely to be matched for their jobs than their counterparts (see figure, right). The youth with pre-graduation work experience gain the exposure and necessary skills to take up jobs for which they are better matched

Additionally

- **Working while studying is associated with a greater probability of being over-educated and a lower probability of being under-educated for the job.**
 - These results hold true using both the subjective and empirical measures.
 - Working while studying: reduces the likelihood of feeling undereducated by 7% and being undereducated by 11%; and increases the likelihood of feeling overeducated by 5% or being overeducated for the job by 24%.
 - However, working while studying increases the chance of feeling matched for the job by 2%, but reduces the likelihood of being matched for the job by 12%.
- **Workers at the beginning of their careers may settle for relatively low-skilled jobs to gain work experience,** which is often required by employers.

However, working while studying could interfere with schooling, resulting in reduced academic achievement and lower quality degree.

- In situations where the work done while studying is not in a field related to the study area, it may interfere with education attainment and be counterproductive.
- Most of the youths who worked while studying in the survey were from households of lower socio-economic status.
 - Indeed, the literature suggests that combining education with work may signal a lower social background and a disinterest in one's educational development.

Conclusions and policy implications

As work-based learning programs are rolled out, guidance mechanisms (such as career counselling and pre-placement training and conditional financial support) **should be provided alongside.** Such measures may help youth who wish to combine work with learning while in college or universities get exposure to the right amount and type of work and ensure that they are matched for their future job.

Policymakers should consider the possible negative effects of combining learning and working when designing work-based skills development programs. Monitoring and quality control with proper placement and feedback mechanisms are needed to ensure college and university students find work related to their areas of study.

Education matching, work-study and age

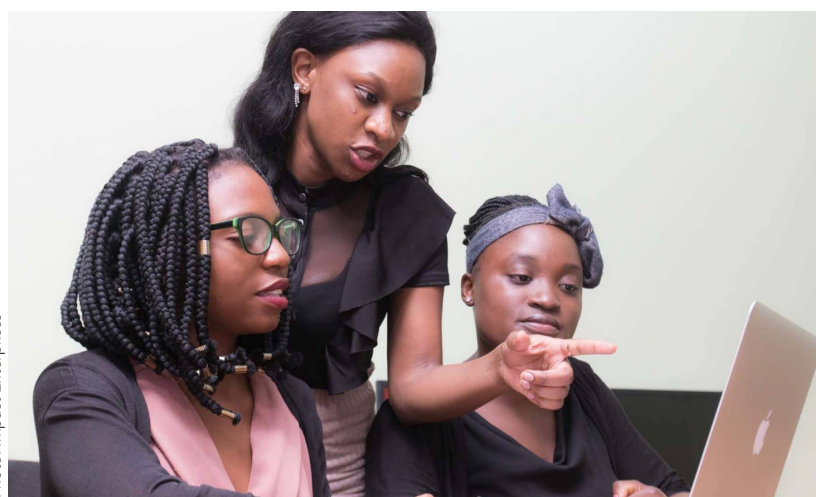
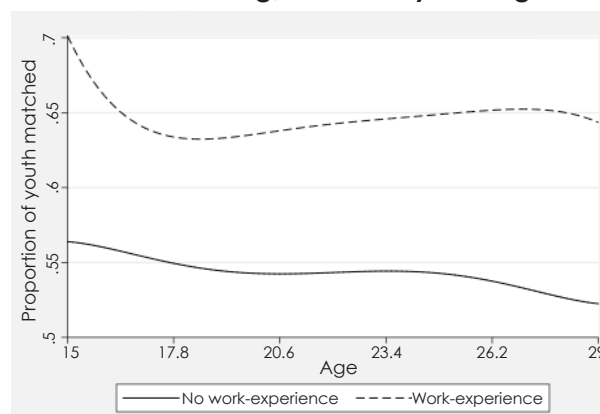


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This brief summarizes outcomes from **PMMA-20280** supported under the **PAGE II initiative (2016-2020)**. To find out more about the research methods and findings, read the full paper, published as part of the **PEP working paper series**.

PAGE II is a global research and capacity-building initiative for Policy Analysis on Growth and Employment in developing countries. PAGE II is supported by the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom (or UK Aid) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

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