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Réflexions sur les politiques et les pratiques

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Editorial

This volume of the *Journal of African Transformation* contains a selection of papers presented at the 2019 African Economic Conference – jointly organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme– which was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 2 to 4 December 2019. The Conference was held under the theme: “Jobs, entrepreneurship and capacity development for African youth”. It was a timely conference, as the issue of youth empowerment and their space in driving the African development agenda was more important than ever, especially as Africa intended to accelerate its growth and transformation process. The continent’s growing youth population, which some refer to as the “youth bulge”, requires being fully tapped and its potential maximized. Unfortunately, despite 10 million to 12 million young people entering the workforce every year, only around 3 million formal jobs are created annually in Africa. Many young Africans are eking out a living in the informal sector, largely underemployed or unemployed, so their capacity and potential remain grossly underutilized.

With less than a decade remaining to achieve the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the issue of youth productivity is critical for Africa. One of the factors explaining the high unemployment rates of young people in Africa is the problem of skills and capacity development. This requires concerted efforts by Governments to invest more in building the relevant skills and capacities needed to meet the demands of the labour market. The outcome document from the 2019 African Economic Conference called upon African policymakers to take bold steps to tackle red tape and high start-up costs, to boost entrepreneurship and create decent and well-paying jobs for young people in Africa. In addition, there is a need to provide incentives for young entrepreneurs. Many African countries have investment promotion packages for foreign investors and multinational

corporations, but very little for their own budding young entrepreneurs. This needs to be corrected.

One of the highlights of the 2019 African Economic Conference was a session for young African researchers from different parts of the continent to share their research on many dimensions of the job and entrepreneurship challenges that affect young Africans, and to present innovative ideas on how to tackle the persistent mismatch between labour market requirements and skills acquired by the youth population. From the many papers presented at the Conference, seven were selected for inclusion in this volume, and have undergone a rigorous peer review process.

Contributors

Dossè Mawussi Djahini-Afawoubo offers a new perspective in analysing the impact of public policies on reducing unemployment in Togo. The author presents the state of unemployment there, emphasizing the higher rate among women. Using the propensity score matching method, he assesses how active labour market policies reduce the time taken to move from the training stage to working life. He comes to some interesting conclusions, showing that young people who benefit from active labour market policies find jobs eight times faster after their training. This effect is much more significant in women, a result that remains robust when the heterogeneity of the sample is controlled. Three quarters of the jobs thus filled are precarious, and more than half of the young employees want to change careers. The commitment

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