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ABSTRACT

Technical-Vocational Education And Youth
Unemployment In Barbados

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The high rate of unemployment which exists among Barbadian youth has prompted local development planners to vocationalise the curriculum. Yet, two decades of technical-vocational education does not appear to have effected a reduction in unemployment. In the light of this, an investigation has been conceived to discover whether the provision of technical-vocational education really can impact on youth unemployment in Barbados.

The data employed included government publications and official reports as well as responses to a questionnaire administered to a cohort of academic and technical-vocational graduates of the local educational system. The chi-square was utilised to discover whether a significant difference existed between the performance of the two groups in the labour market, and the contingency coefficient was employed to determine the magnitude of that relationship.

The findings indicate not only that the type of curriculum had a significant - though moderate - relationship with the acquisition of employment, but that technical-vocational graduates were indeed more advantaged than their academic counterparts when they entered the labour market. When other independent variables were incorporated into the model, socio-economic status was seen to be responsible for the largest proportion of the variance, though gender was also significantly related to the acquisition of employment. These findings were consistent with the literature and confirmed the hypothesis that technical-vocational education was unlikely, on its own, to effect a reduction in employment among Barbadian youth, since ascriptive and structural factors also contributed to the local employment situation. The success of technical-vocational education can therefore be ensured only if it is a component of an overall developmental strategy aimed at the reduction of unemployment.