



Promoting and measuring the effectiveness of labor insertion policies in an emerging country

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Labour insertion for young people in weak economic territories: analysis, policies and evaluation

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Short abstract (200-400 words)

Youth employment represents a hard challenge across emerging countries, where the youngsters generally face structural, economic, and demographic barriers limiting their access to stable and decent jobs (ILO, 2025).

In Senegal, youths' labor insertion faces a very fragile context marked by high informality, youth unemployment around 20% (ages 15–24), and an annual inflow of approximately 300,000 new entrants compared to only about 30,000 available formal job opportunities (Diallo et al., 2023). Although Senegal remains one of the most politically stable countries within West Africa, its labor market is highly segmented, with over 90% of young people working under precarious conditions and without social protection (Rodríguez-Castelán and

Vazquez, 2022). Demographic growth amplifies employment vulnerability, further exacerbated by skill mismatches and institutional weaknesses.

The objective of this contribution is to investigate the evolution and effectiveness of active labor market policies and youth employment programs implemented by the Senegalese government since 2000. The study adopts a systematic review approach of the main labor and self-employment policy initiatives, as well as more recent programs. By offering a comprehensive assessment of youth employment policies implemented by the Senegalese government over the past two decades, this study provides an interpretive framework for understanding the current policy mix in Senegal. It also classifies the Senegalese model as a “promotional-concerted” type with a strong focus on self-employment. In this light, it contributes to the theoretical debate by distinguishing African trajectories from Western paradigms. These findings support policy recommendations, advancing literature on inclusive development in informal economies.

Abstract:

Youth employment represents a hard challenge across emerging countries, where the youngsters generally face structural, economic, and demographic barriers limiting their access to stable and decent jobs (ILO, 2025). Besides high youth unemployment and NEET rates (World Economic Forum, 2025), the main recurring issues are skills mismatch and weak training systems, as well as the lack of decent job and diffuse informality (ILO, 2025). Moreover, marginalized youths (e.g. women, low-income groups, persons with disabilities) face strong barriers to inclusion due to discrimination and limited access to resources (UNECE, 2025).

In Senegal, youths’ labor insertion faces a very fragile context marked by high informality, youth unemployment around 20% (ages 15–24), and an annual inflow of approximately 300,000 new entrants compared to only about 30,000 available formal job opportunities (Diallo et al., 2023). Although Senegal remains one of the most politically stable countries within West Africa, its labor market is highly segmented, with over 90% of young people working under precarious conditions and without social protection (Rodríguez-Castelán and

Vazquez, 2022). Demographic growth — with a median age of 18 and 34% of the population under 35 — amplifies employment vulnerability, further exacerbated by mismatches between education and training and labor demand and institutional weaknesses.

The objective of this contribution is to investigate the evolution and effectiveness of active labor market policies and youth employment programs implemented by the Senegalese government since 2000, assessing their results and structural challenges in relation to the strategic sectors of the Priority Action Plan (PAP 2A).

The study adopts a systematic review approach of the main labor and self-employment policy initiatives — including PAEJ/PAOJ, FNEJ, PUISEJ, DER-FJ, PRODAC, PSE-J, and NPNE — as well as more recent programs such as the PFPI supported by the Mastercard Foundation and the 2021 Emergency Program. The analysis combines data from institutional sources (ANPEJ, PEP, World Bank) and empirical studies to examine achievements in terms of jobs created, training delivered, and inclusion of vulnerable groups (Tsambou et al., 2024). It also draws on findings from ex post evaluations and mixed-methods studies (pre-post analyses and qualitative interviews).

To strengthen the evidence about the effectiveness of labor insertion policies, the contribution includes some preliminary analysis of an experimental employment policy, recently launched (DTIP), that the research group is currently evaluating with counterfactual design. Some considerations from the entry survey will be used to obtain suggestions for future research, including the feasibility of a counterfactual design in an African context.

Added value: By offering a comprehensive assessment of youth employment policies implemented by the Senegalese government over the past two decades, this study provides an interpretive framework for understanding the current policy mix in Senegal. It also classifies the Senegalese model as a “promotional-concerted” type — characterized by a hybridization of state interventions and international partnerships — with a strong focus on self-employment. In this light, it contributes to the theoretical debate by distinguishing African trajectories from Western paradigms (liberal, corporatist, flexicurity). These findings support policy recommendations, advancing literature on inclusive development in informal economies.

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