

Employment Services



Public Employment Services

in English-speaking Africa
Proposals for Re-Organisation

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African Regional Labour Administration Centre

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ABBREVIATIONS

ILO International Labour Office

ISCO-88 International Standard Classification of Occupations (revised in 1988)

LMI Labour Market Information

LMIS Labour Market Information System

PES Public Employment Services

VIG Vocational Information and Guidance

Preface

The proposals for a re-organisation of Public Employment Services (PES) in English-speaking Africa presented in this publication emanate from the multi-bilateral funded ILO Employment Services Project. The project, based at the African Regional Labour Administration Centre in Harare, entered into its third phase in July 1996 with emphasis on the "Re-Orientation of Public Employment Services under Structural Adjustment Programmes". The Adjustment Programmes have put many PES into a process of marginalisation just at a time when their services were needed most in contributing towards the proper functioning of the labour markets. In this context the idea of developing a handbook for decision makers and employment services staff grew. It

has two objectives: firstly, the awareness on the political level for problems and opportunities of PES will be raised; secondly, practical advice on how to (re-) organise the technical functions of PES will be provided.

Many of the PES in English-speaking Africa have always been operating on a very low level of human and financial resources. Structural Adjustment Programmes have additionally reduced the resources, often to a level below the very basic needs to keep up a minimum service of core functions. The challenge remains to develop and reform PES by using only the resources currently allocated to them. Under this condition, organisational changes play an important role. A modern set up concentrating on tasks like information dissemination on occupations, training institutions, self-employment opportunities, and the labour market as such does not necessarily need a large increase in personnel or finances. As a result, PES could improve both their position in the administration as well as their relationship with the private sector.

The handbook is introduced by a problem analysis of the present situation of PES, followed by a number of proposals for re-orienting personnel, functions and available resources towards more focussed and responsive services. These proposals are based on experiences gained through the project implementation and fact-finding missions and, thus, describe changes that could be implemented by almost all countries in the region. They consider the minimum requirements for fully functioning PES, the organisational implications, including the role of the social partners, and the funding problem with a view to the envisaged sustainability of such changes. This part of the publication mainly addresses the political and management level.

Subsequent chapters deal with the technical functions of PES. They provide guidelines for employment officers working at the operational level in placement, guidance and counselling activities or in the labour market information function. It is expected that these chapters will also be a valuable guide for decision-making at the political and management level.

This publication is based on a draft paper on the "Re-Orienting of Public Employment Services in English-speaking Africa", prepared by the Project Manager of the ILO Employment Services Project, Mr. Gregor Schulz. The draft version has been presented to the Labour Administration Branch of the ILO Geneva. Subsequently, it was sent out together with a questionnaire to key informants in the Public Employment Services of several African countries. The authors are grateful for the valuable comments of the ILO colleagues and the replies of the counterparts. Many thanks go to the Project Expert, Ms. Britta Klemmer, who has redrafted the publication. In consultation with the Project Manager, she has searched available literature and manuals from various national sources and provided essential inputs to this publication. She has also prepared the diagrams.

Gregor Schulz
Project Manager

I. Introduction

Background

Public Employment Services can play a crucial role within the labour market. As a provider of regularly collected, comprehensive and up-to-date labour market information they could be the focal point for the shaping of labour market policies and programmes. With services like information dissemination on occupations, training institutions and self-employment opportunities they could attract a broad range of interested job seekers. Other government institutions might also have a strong interest in this information. Close contacts with employers and their business associations would not only increase the number of notified vacancies but it would also enable the employment service to become a major partner in personnel planning and development. Employment services could thereby build a strong link with the private sector from which both sides would profit. Vocational guidance and individual counselling activities would complete the picture of the modern Public Employment Service.

Unfortunately, the situation as described above does not match reality in English-speaking African countries. Very few countries provide reasonably good services, while in others the services are merely noticed by the public or the government institutions. The insufficient capacity of Public Employment Services and of related institutional and administrative infrastructure hampers the design and implementation of labour market policies and programmes required to facilitate market-oriented reform.

This is particularly serious because throughout English-speaking Africa, countries are implementing Structural Adjustment Programmes or have begun indigenous policy reform towards greater market-orientation and liberalisation of their economies. The growing consensus that the success of these programmes also depends on their attention to social costs and employment implications is not matched by the institutional capacity of the ministries concerned.

Although all countries in the region have severe unemployment problems, the role of Public Employment Services is hardly understood and only placement services are offered. For various reasons this function is not producing satisfactory results but rather demonstrates the inability to provide efficient and relevant services. Employment Services are marginalised in low-priority ministries within the government hierarchy. This affects their budget and poses constraints which keep the services at a minimum standard in some cases. For instance, African countries find that in the long run their economic adjustment might be restricted by severe skill shortages. Yet, Public Employment Services are unable to supply candidates for posts that require higher skills and cannot provide job seekers with information about training opportunities in order to improve their qualifications.

Public employment services in English-speaking African countries generally do not react flexibly to important changes in the labour market, such as the growing importance of employment in the informal sector. Thus, the huge labour supply is not registered and serviced, and the labour demand of this sector is not sourced. Relations with the formal private sector are deteriorating because there is no history of successful cooperation and little confidence in the ability of public services to develop.

Structure

This handbook concentrates on the basic functions of employment services, as stated in Article 6 of the ILO Convention Nr. 88 (1948) on the Organisation of Employment Services:

- Placement
- Vocational Information and Guidance
- Labour Market Information

The handbook is divided into *six chapters* starting with this introduction. The *second chapter* briefly describes and analyses the problems of Public Employment Services in English-speaking African countries. The *third chapter* offers possibilities for a re-orientation and modernisation of employment services with regard to the specific functions mentioned. *Chapter four* deals with the placement function and is the beginning of the more technical part of the handbook. *Chapter five* covers vocational information and guidance, and *chapter six* on labour market information follows it.

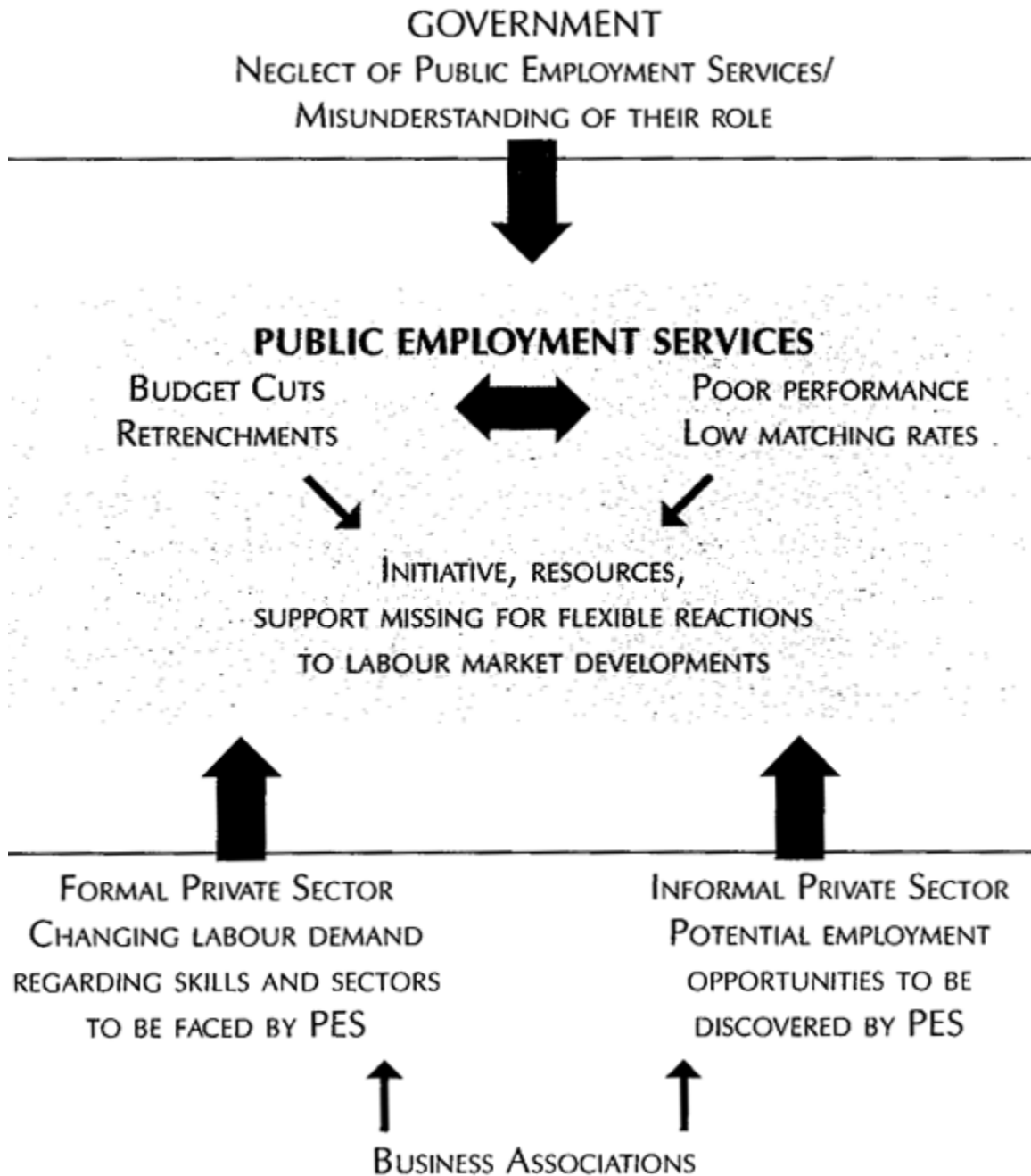
Target Group

The handbook is directed at employment officers and decision-makers in government and the private sector. In order to reach both groups, a problem analysis is combined with practical proposals for a re-organisation of employment services. Whereas a purely technical manual would only be used by the operational staff in employment services, a theoretical analysis would be of interest only to higher-level officials in the ministries. The combination of both is an attempt to develop a common understanding of the problems and the potential role of Public Employment Services.

Chapter two, which analyses problems of Public Employment Services, gives reasons for and shows effects of their difficult situation. The employment officer reading this chapter will probably find well-known problems. But for the decision-makers in the relevant ministries and in the private sector some of the information might be new and will help to reveal the complexity of the situation. The technical part of the handbook will assist employment officers in their day-to-day work. It also provides ideas for a broader range of activities and, thereby, presents many different functions that employment services could implement, even at a basic level.

II. Public Employment Services Under Pressure

The analysis of the problems of Public Employment Services in English-speaking African countries is a rather complex issue involving both the government and the private sector. Suffering from little support inside the government and unable to keep pace with developments in the private sector, Employment Services are increasingly under pressure and have already ceased to exist in some countries.



Public Employment Services and the Government

Although all countries in the region have severe unemployment and underemployment problems, the positive role that PES could play in the labour market is hardly understood or promoted by their governments. With a few exceptions most of the PES only offer registration services and perform poorly in their traditional placement function. Thus, PES are seen as being dispensable and there are examples where they already have ceased to exist. In some countries this is not perceived as a dilemma while it is ignored in others.

It should be taken into account that all governments of the region are facing budgetary problems and are not likely to be responsive to any proposals involving increased human and financial resources. On the other hand many countries have experienced considerable progress in terms of political stability and economic development. However, what they have in common is that the Public Employment Services are marginalised in ministries that are also of low priority within the ministerial hierarchy. This affects the budget and poses constraints which often keep the services at a very low level.

Public Employment Services "internally"

The threat of budget cuts and retrenchments

The deteriorating quality of public services and the effect on the economy as a whole has made civil service reforms an urgent issue for governments. Nevertheless, in most cases serious budget cuts and a high number of dismissals are experienced as the initial effect. Public Employment Services are among those hardest hit especially as they already operate on very scarce resources and reduced staff in most countries. A further reduction has a devastating effect, both directly on the resource basis as well as indirectly on the working morale of the staff.

Poor performance of Employment Services

In many of the countries in English-speaking Africa, Public Employment Services are operating under deteriorating conditions. They are seriously understaffed and necessary equipment is often scarce. Facilities for communication and transportation are poor and often not operational. It does not come as a surprise that under these circumstances and regarding the results of the traditional placement function, PES are generally perceived as performing poorly. This is the more disappointing as the staff in many of the services is well trained but lacking the tools to work efficiently.

Looking at the low matching rates of PES, the reasons are once again to be found at different levels, starting with the overall economic situation in most of the countries. Due to economic hardship and reform processes that initially lead to high retrenchment numbers, there are very few job vacancies available. This situation is worsening day by day with a fast growing labour force, huge numbers of university, college and school graduates and drop-outs. Even fewer vacancies are notified with the PES as this is either not mandatory or not enforced. However, practical experience has shown that even compulsory systems do not attract more vacancies to the PES as long as they do not provide a qualified and efficient service that employers can value.

At the micro-level of PES, there are further reasons for their poor performance. The organisational set-up often requires employment officers to deal with labour inspection, industrial relations and other aspects of labour administration at the same time. Contacts made through inspection and labour relations are for obvious reasons not used to canvass for jobs and to offer applications to employers. Labour inspectors are rarely seen as equal partners by employers and industrial relations officers, because of their role in disputes, are positioned in a completely different context. This situation simply overburdens the individual officers in terms of qualification and working capacity and naturally results in prioritisation. If the officers are in a

position to concentrate on the employment services, most of their time is spent with the registration of job seekers. Lacking basic transportation and communication equipment, it then depends on the individual initiative of the employment officer whether or not job canvassing for example belongs to the daily activities.

Public Employment Services and the Private Sector

If regular contacts with employers were maintained, PES would be in a position to follow the changes in labour demand both in general and in the specific needs of their individual clients. Especially in countries undergoing adjustment programmes, PES have to recognise that these programmes involve the adjustment of human resources, not only concerning numbers but also competence. New and changing qualifications will be needed in the long run including:

- high educational standards
- skills acquired through high-quality vocational training
- occupational flexibility
- geographical mobility.

The labour market obviously demands the opposite of what employment services currently provide. Efficient, client-oriented, pro-active and resourceful Public Employment Services are needed at a time when none of this is given. PES mainly provide unskilled workers and are not able to fill vacancies requiring good skills and high qualifications. It is impossible for employment services to follow closely the developments in labour demand and what they provide on the supply side is not what is needed by a modernising private sector.

Another constraint for effective placement is that Public Employment Services in their traditional way of operating are disconnected from the often fastest growing sector of the economy, the informal sector. Growing informal sector employment reflects the poor governance of public institutions in the sense that their influence over local market developments is weakening. For Public Employment Services this has far-reaching implications. Contacts with the employers in this sector are not established and potential job opportunities are ignored as a consequence. For job seekers in the informal sector, PES are hardly accessible and the services offered are not very attractive.

The general diagnosis that relations between PES and the formal sector are deteriorating and that PES are disconnected from the informal sector is not only valid at the level of the enterprises but also for their business associations. On the one hand, PES do not provide services that seem to be relevant for business associations in most countries. On the other hand, it must be said that often the associations are not very confident regarding the ability of public services to develop into modern and client-oriented institutions that could fulfill important business support activities. It cannot be expected that the initiative for improved contact will come from the side of the associations. It rather seems that, first, PES have to prove that they can make progress and develop into an interesting partner.

Whatever the different reasons for the poor performance of PES are, in the end PES are caught in a vicious circle. Poor performance contributes to the bad image and is taken as a justification for

further budget cuts. This reduces resources even further and has a negative impact on the working morale and the motivation of the personnel. Once they reach this stage, Public Employment Services are no longer able to react in a flexible manner to labour market developments and steer themselves out of lethargy.

III. Proposals for a Re-Organisation of Public Employment Services

Considering the problem analysis, the re-orientation of Public Employment Services seems to be a difficult task. Proposals run the risk of appearing unrealistic while depending on preconditions that cannot be forced. On the other hand, there will be no improvement of the current situation without alternative scenarios being presented and means being discussed. Most public administration is in one way or another a service institution providing a certain range of services either to the public or within the government itself. In that sense it provides services as a product of its dealings, just as a manufacturing business or even assembly line. In order to produce the anticipated service (product) a certain level of resources needs to be in place. On the one hand there are the human resources, being the backbone of any undertaking. For each post a certain qualification and level of experience is needed and for the whole operation a minimum number of staff must be in place. Specifically in this latter area one can find a lot of negligence. For example nobody would try to operate an assembly line for any product with only one person, unless it is fully automated. However, Public Employment Services with only one officer are quite common in English-speaking Africa. And in addition, this officer usually has little equipment to make the work more efficient.

Therefore, the following proposals are suggested for re-organised and fully functioning Public Employment Services. They are not a description of the present status nor do they set out the ideal situation. The proposals can rather be interpreted as describing that stage in the institutional development of PES at which a basic level of fully functioning modern employment services is reached.

Considering the resources currently available to them, the countries in the region have different starting points for the development of their PES. Some countries might not consider the proposals at all as they go far beyond their resources, whereas others might consider them as being too basic. However, based on experience gained through the implementation of the Employment Services Project and fact-finding missions, the proposals presented here could be implemented in almost all of the countries of English-speaking Africa. The main precondition is not so much the question of resources but rather the political will, i.e. the prioritisation of labour matters and the acknowledgement of the role of PES in this regard.

The steps that are necessary to develop PES vary from country to country and have to be discussed on an individual basis. For English-speaking Africa, there are basically two scenarios from which the development of PES starts. The first scenario might be a country that has a countrywide system of Public Employment Services. Headquarters, offices in the capital and in regional centres have a relatively good number of staff whereas the remaining offices are usually understaffed with an average of one or two professionals each, providing only basic services. In

some countries, the decentralisation of the service is combined with a lacking common policy and control, and hampers the implementation of organisational changes.

The second scenario might be a country that has very little resources for Public Employment Services. The few professionals are mainly occupied with registration work. At the same time, they are involved in related tasks like inspection and arbitration. Even basic facilities are missing in the offices.

In the first case, a re-organisation would most probably result in an initial reduction of the total number of offices in order to staff them adequately and to provide core functions. In the second case, the development starts more or less with the establishment of a single office as a model with proper job definitions and additional resources for transport and basic communication facilities.

Starting with a summary of the main issues, the proposals concentrate on the set-up, the funding and the financial organisation of employment information centres.

"Employment Information Centre" is not simply a new label but characterises Public Employment Services that concentrate more on their information function. This is seen as an attempt to reverse the current trend in which employment services are shrinking to mere registration offices for the unemployed. Improved information services in the guidance and counselling function, in the labour market information function and in the overall promotional strategy of the centre could have a far reaching impact. Job seekers could be provided with much needed advice on job and training opportunities. Employment services could demonstrate their capacity in that area and produce outputs that are interesting for employers' and workers' organisations as well as other institutions involved in the labour market. In order to secure the necessary political support and eventually additional funds, employment services could use this new focus to improve their image not only with other organisations but also within their ministry.

Preconditions. There are certain preconditions that have to be met. First of all, the initiative has to come from the employment services and depends largely on the commitment of the employment officers to learn and to be more flexible. The second crucial point is the government's political will to start this exercise and to believe that employment services could have a positive impact on the labour market functioning. Another precondition is that, in order to be able to even meet the minimum requirements, most employment services in English-speaking Africa would actually need additional resources.

Funding. Efficient and modern PES are not available at no cost. Funds have to come either from taxes, an insurance scheme or, for example, a levy on salaries. Employment services can raise additional funds but they have to develop unconventional ideas. This could include nominal charges for some services or the attachment of profit centres providing additional services in non-core functions.

Minimum requirement. To establish an effective employment service, at least three professional and three clerical staff should perform the three major functions of placement,

vocational information and guidance, and labour market information in each centre. Ideally, at least one such centre would be established in each district and major town. A specialisation of officers on certain industries is possible at a later stage but feasible only with a larger number of personnel.

Promotion of the centres. The employment services themselves have to promote the idea of their re-orientation within their ministry and towards employers and workers. They have to convince all decision-makers of the necessity and the possible outputs of the new information centres. Promotional activities are not limited to the beginning period but should rather become a permanent feature.

Support of social partners. Employment services have to offer their "products" to get the attention of employers' and workers' organisations. Statistical information on a regular basis and focussed placement efforts are examples for interesting "products" in this regard. A mutually beneficial relationship and involvement in the decision-making body of the information centre might convince these organisations to support an institution they hardly cooperate with presently.

Outputs. The expected outputs are:

- Improved information services
- Greater flexibility to react to local needs and problems
- Increased responsibilities of the centre within the given framework
- Increased motivation to produce measurable outputs and in time
- Transparency through tripartite supervision and external audits
- High interest of social partners in the success due to financial commitments.

The Set-Up Of Employment Information Centres

When setting up Employment Information Centres, the decision about staff and functions will certainly vary from country to country. However, the proposal is to establish centres that fulfill the three major tasks of employment services i.e. placement, vocational information and guidance, and labour market information. They would initially comprise five to six persons who need to be provided with basic communication and transport facilities. Keeping the scarce resources in mind, any change in the organisation of PES has to be first of all considered within the existing resources and has to exhaust the present potential. It will have to be proven that changes have a considerable positive impact before any additional resources will be released.

It is not easy to determine the minimum requirement of staff for different countries. In countries with a higher number of employment officers it might rather be a matter of redeploying personnel to the new information centres. Having the employment officers concentrating on employment services and not on other labour administration matters at the same time would be the major improvement. In this case, the present structures would be reorganised into a net of Employment Information Centres throughout the country. They would fulfill the three main functions in order to gain necessary experience in all the activities. The number of centres depends on the availability of staff, which might result in a relatively low number of offices in the beginning. At a later stage, additional offices might be introduced covering only part of the

activities according to local needs. An interministerial approach for certain functions might also be considered. For vocational information this could mean that officers from the Ministry of Education complement the staff of the centres.

In fact, in most countries of the region the number of staff is not sufficient to establish a net of information centres right from the beginning. The proposal of five to six officers per centre appears to be already a maximum demand under these circumstances. Based on the assumption that this set-up is nevertheless necessary to provide quality services and to produce measurable outputs, resources should be concentrated to start with possibly just one centre. This would provide the chance to demonstrate efficiency and to raise the interest necessary to induce and justify the allocation of additional resources for the gradual expansion of the network.

In any case, it is desirable to have Employment Information Centres separated from other labour administration activities such as inspection and industrial relations. Employers rarely see labour inspectors as equal partners and industrial relations officers operate in a completely different context which is concerned with disputes. There are, of course, areas of cooperation but this should happen on a deliberate basis.

The major tasks of an employment service influence the organisation of these offices. According to Article 6 of the ILO Convention Nr. 88 (1948) on the Organisation of Employment Services, there are three major tasks, namely:

- placement
- vocational information and guidance
- labour market information.

Depending on capacity in terms of financial resources, Employment Information Centres would either play an advisory and coordinating role or fulfill the following additional functions themselves:

- vocational training
- labour market interventions
- disbursement of unemployment benefits.

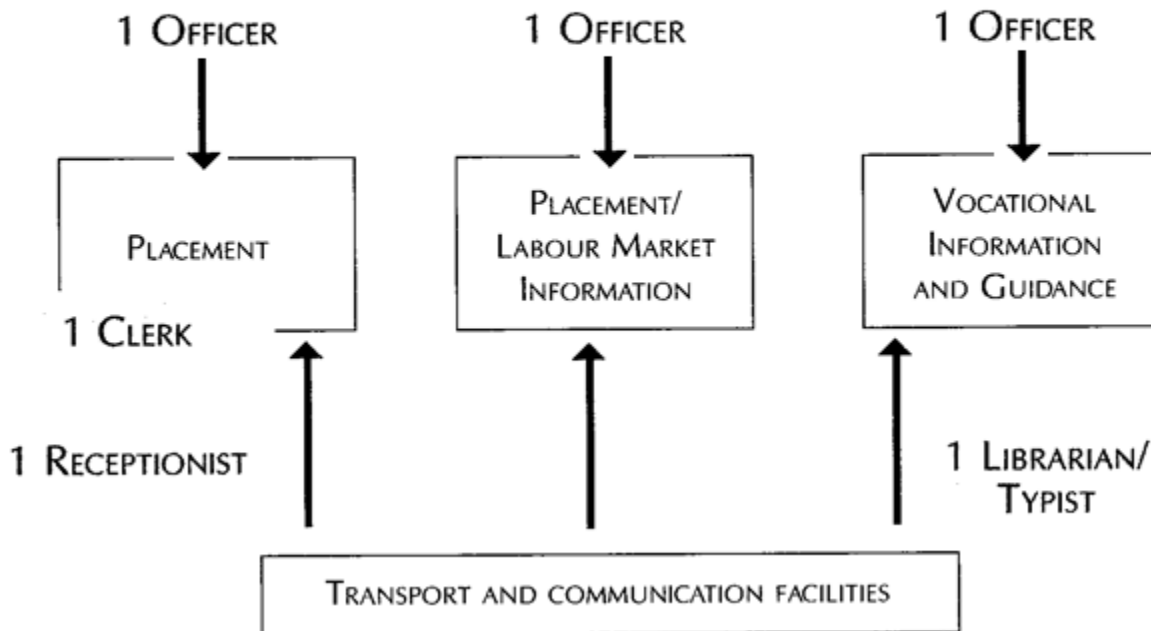
The centres should also offer specialised services to meet the naturally different needs and expectations of unskilled and highly educated clients. However, local standards and needs should be the guiding factor to shape the specifics of each centre and not an academic approach. Looking at the staff needed to meet the basic functions of a modern PES, the minimum requirement is three professional staff and three clerical. The distribution would look like this:

- The **placement function** demands specialised personnel. But looking at the available resources to begin with, this could initially be covered by one specialist who is as far as possible in constant touch with employers of all kinds, including the informal sector. This person must have access to own transport and telephone and might need clerical assistance for the registration of job seekers and vacancies.

- **Vocational information and guidance** involves individual treatment of clients and a high level of qualifications. Preferably a psychologically trained person should do the job. This person must have a number of different working experiences to handle the clients with their various backgrounds properly. For this officer, transport and communication facilities are needed to maintain contacts and to undertake information activities outside of the office.
- The **labour market information function** needs a statistician who will have to communicate a lot with other public institutions to collect the necessary information. Ideally this person would share the communication and transportation facilities and support the placement officer by working at least 50% of the time in placement activities.

Therefore at this stage, the office comprises three professional and one clerical members of staff. Additionally, another two clerical staff should be working at the reception and as typist/librarian. If the centre is providing vocational information, information on training institutions and on the employers in the area, this function would preferably also be done by a specialist. With this basic structure, the set-up can be upgraded to almost any size according to the needs and resources available. The following diagram summarises the minimum requirements for Employment Information Centres.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION CENTRES



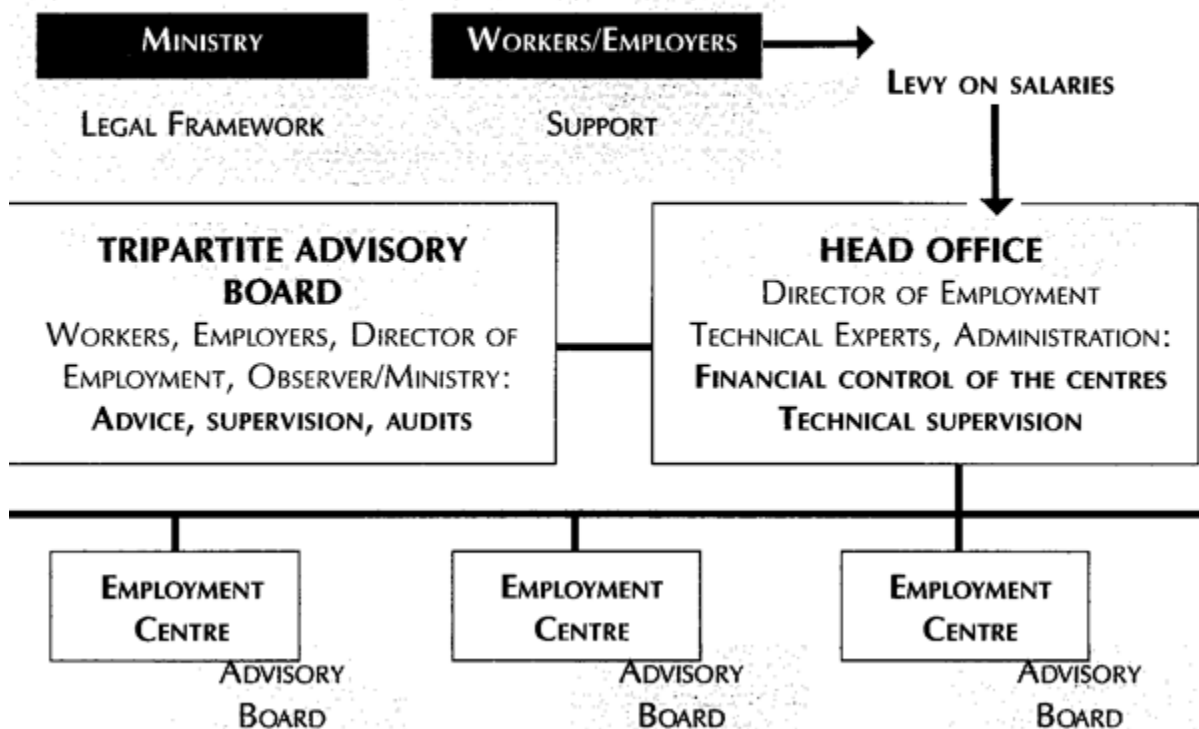
Financial Organisation

Efficient and modern PES are not available at no cost. All beneficiaries, whether individuals, representatives of civil society, government or social partners have to be clear about this fact.

Funds have to be raised either through tax contributions, an insurance scheme or, for example, a levy on salaries. In order to secure the commitment of government and social partners, the financial organisation of employment centres would at best be based on tripartite cooperation.

However, each country has its own background concerning fiscal policies, laws and social welfare systems which makes proposals for financial organisation difficult. Nevertheless, and since financial questions remain at the centre of administrative reform processes, a model for financial organisation and a few ideas for additional funding will be presented here.

THE FINANCIAL ORGANISATION: A PROPOSAL



Based on funds out of, for example, a levy on salaries the overall organisation could be that of a parastatal body with a countrywide network of employment centres. A head office, controlled and advised by a tripartite advisory board would govern this body. The head office would comprise of a Director of Employment, technical experts for technical supervision and the administration for the financial control of the centres. The advisory board would bring together workers' and employers' representatives, the Director of Employment and possibly an observer from the ministry. The board would control the funds and order an independent audit on a regular basis. Depending on the resources available, a network of employment centres could be established and organised in a similar way, i.e. each centre would be advised and controlled by a local advisory board. This structure could be applied on regional or district level. A precondition is that the social partners are organised on these levels as well.

There should be enough flexibility to guarantee the proper functioning of the centres. Within the administrative, financial and policy framework provided by the Head Office and the ministry, the centres should be sufficiently independent to emphasise certain parts of their programme. This could be in the form of specialised training activities, for example, for retrenched, training for application procedures, focussed information activities etc. in response to local needs. Such spending should be coordinated with the advisory board to guarantee the consent of all involved partners.

The change towards a parastatal organisation would furthermore facilitate the search for additional funding sources as for example the introduction of charges. Although Public Employment Services are supposed to serve their clients free of charge, certain services could be provided on the basis of a nominal charge. Brochures could for example be sold at the price of the printing costs. The expertise in it will be free of charge. It might be an instrument to make people appreciate the services provided and would give the offices the chance of gaining revolving funds. One could also think of attaching "profit centres" to the employment centres providing secretarial services, e.g. copy services and assistance for state-of-the-art applications. The income generating effect would be a great help in maintaining and sustaining the Employment Information Centres. A major boost for the funding situation would be an unemployment insurance scheme connected with the Public Employment Services, but this is not yet available in most African countries.

IV. The Placement Function

Principles

Voluntary Services

Job placement services are available on a voluntary basis and are at the disposal of all employees and employers.

Personalised placement and counselling

Job placement and counselling services take individual account of the legitimate wishes of the employees and the employers. The special circumstances of the companies and of the vacancies to be filled are taken into consideration just as are the suitability of the advice-seekers and applicants, e.g. their previous school education, their vocational training and skills as well as their personal circumstances.

Confidentiality and privacy

For job placement and counselling services, the principle of confidentiality and privacy is especially relevant. On the one hand, job seekers reveal their personal details to great extent. On the other hand, the special conditions of vacancies are known to the Public Employment Service. All this information has to be handled carefully and with a sense of responsibility.

Impartiality

According to the principle of impartiality, individual employees or employers must be neither discriminated against nor favoured by the job placement and job counselling services.

Neutrality

The principle of impartiality at the same time includes the absolute neutrality of the Public Employment Service during any industrial disputes between the employers and employees.

Free of charge

Placement, like all core services, should be provided free of charge to enable everybody to use them irrespective of his or her economic situation.

Basic Placement Services:

The Placement Practice

Placement services are offered to help job seekers find employment and to help employers fill their vacancies under the specific and individual conditions prevalent. In order to fulfill this function, registration and matching procedures are undertaken. Both job seekers and vacancies have to be registered to obtain comparable and comprehensive data. The registration process, though, should always be directed to the overall objective of matching job seekers and vacancies successfully. The different steps of the registration and matching process are described below.

Occupational Classification

The classification of occupations is a catalogue that lists and describes, according to a pre-established order and method of classification, all the occupations exercised in a country, with a code number assigned to each. It is a reference document designed to avoid misunderstandings and approximations. With regard to the placement function, it is also an important tool for concise and consistent data collection and storage.

The International Labour Organisation has drawn up the International Standard Classification of Occupations, last revised in 1988, and known as ISCO-88. It has been developed to facilitate international comparisons of occupational statistics and to serve as a model for countries developing or revising their national occupational classifications. In the ISCO-System occupations are aggregated at four levels. Further sub-divisions are carried out on the basis of skill specialisation, defined by reference to the field of knowledge required, the tools and machinery used, the materials worked on or with, as well as the kinds of goods and services produced. For each of the groups at the four levels of aggregation a code number, a title and a brief description of the content is provided.

The following example of a *bricklayer* illustrates the four levels of aggregation:

Out of ten **major groups** there is:

Major group 7: *Craft and related trades workers*

...with four sub-major groups

Sub-major group 71: *Extraction and building trades workers*

...with four minor groups

Minor group 712: *Building frame and related trades workers*

...with five unit groups

Unit group 7122: *Bricklayers and stonemasons*

The standardised classification of occupations helps to:

- classify qualifications and skills of job seekers for registration purposes
- classify vacancies notified by employers
- match applicants and vacancies in a transparent way
- report about placement activities
- prepare labour market information in general
- develop employment and manpower studies.

Registration

The registration of job seekers and vacancies is a well-known exercise to employment officers. The systems vary from simply taking notes to registration cards to computerised systems. In the end, however, some information is compiled and filed away. In the case of job seekers this seems to be an endless procedure given the usually high numbers of people. For vacancies this is normally not the case as the notification is most often not compulsory and vacancies are outnumbered by job seekers. Nevertheless, registration is a core function of employment services and has a supportive role for other services like guidance and labour market information.

The registration process leads to personal files and reveals statistical data enabling the Public Employment Service to at least contribute to an overview over the labour force and the labour market in general. If the categories used in the registration of job seekers are relevant, comparable, and regularly updated, these administrative data inform about the structure and skills of the total labour force or part of it in a given country. If the registry of vacancies is updated and maintained through close contact with employers, changes regarding skills needed can easily be monitored. In general, Public Employment Services depend heavily on well-functioning registration and should undertake every effort to guarantee this. Only then are Public Employment Services able to provide information about labour supply and demand and to describe developments of the labour market.

Registration of Job Seekers

The register of job seekers contains information about all the people who approached the employment service and are interested in taking up work or need advice. A file is prepared for each applicant containing all the relevant personal and occupational details. The file contains a code number according to the qualifications and occupation of the job seeker. The employment officer as well as the job seeker should bear in mind that, to a large extent, a careful record of the main details determines the chances of placement.

Job seekers should be required to register with the employment office responsible for their area of residence. Upon request of the job seeker or to facilitate more and better placement opportunities, registration cards and documents may be copied to other employment offices.

Job seekers are requested to register personally. It should be ensured that all necessary information is collected and discussed upon registration, i.e. information about:

- personal circumstances of the applicant (full name, age, sex, physical condition, family status, social/economic situation)
- school education
- vocational training and skills (occupational record and work experience, qualifications, job preferences).

As far as possible, the educational and professional background should be verified with certificates. Preferences for certain occupations and types of contract (full time/part time etc.) need to be discussed with the job seeker to obtain a clear picture and to inform the job seeker about realistic possibilities.

An example of a job seeker registration card follows:

CLIENTS REGISTRATION FORM	
M.....	F.....
ISCO.....	
EO:	
<u>CLIENTS PARTICULARS</u> Date.....	
Name:.....Date of birth:.....Contact tel.....	
Postal address:.....Physical address:.....	
<u>EDUCATION</u> (highest/last certificates) Dates.....	
<u>Schools/Institutions attended From To Qualifications attained</u>	

.....
VOCATIONAL TRAINING Dates.....

Schools/Institutions attended From To Skills acquired

.....
TARGET OCCUPATION

Occupation:.....

Alternatives:

EMPLOYMENT RECORD Dates.....

Name and address of Employer From To Job Title Last Salary earned

.....
SPECIAL APTITUDES/TALENTS

State:

KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES:

Name of Languages Speak Write Read

.....
TRANSPORT: Do you own any means of transport? Yes/No

Drivers Licence Yes/No Classes Issued when

.....
ANY OTHER REMARKS:

.....
A. Action required

i To be placed.....

ii Needs counselling

iii Needs training

B. Placement proposals:

Date Employer ISCO Code Results

.....

c. Follow-up:.....

.....

Registration of Vacancies

In almost all countries, notification of vacancies to the Public Employment Service is voluntary. In order to fulfill the placement function under this condition, good relations with employers is a necessity. Only regular contacts enable the employment services to present themselves as competent partners as well as to get information about needs of employers and developments in the labour market.

The registration of vacancies is not very different from the registration of job seekers as it follows similar procedures. Separate files for each vacancy have to be established, each containing a description of tasks, skills and conditions of employment (remuneration, hours of work, benefits etc.). Information should be as detailed as possible to increase chances of an optimal matching result and to avoid misunderstandings later on. The registration cards should be ordered systematically according to occupational codes. If necessary, information about vacancies should be referred to other employment offices.

An example of a vacancy registration card follows:

VACANCY - PARTICULARS	
EO: ISCO.....	SIC.....
Date Notified	
Employer:	Contact Person:
Postal address:	Physical address: Position:
Business:	Tel. Bus: Home:
Title of job (short description): No. required:	
Age range:	

When required:

Wage rate per month (or state otherwise): Bonus: Provided:
..... Accommodation Yes/No

Food Yes/No

Transport Yes/No

Training arrangements/on the job-training possible

.....

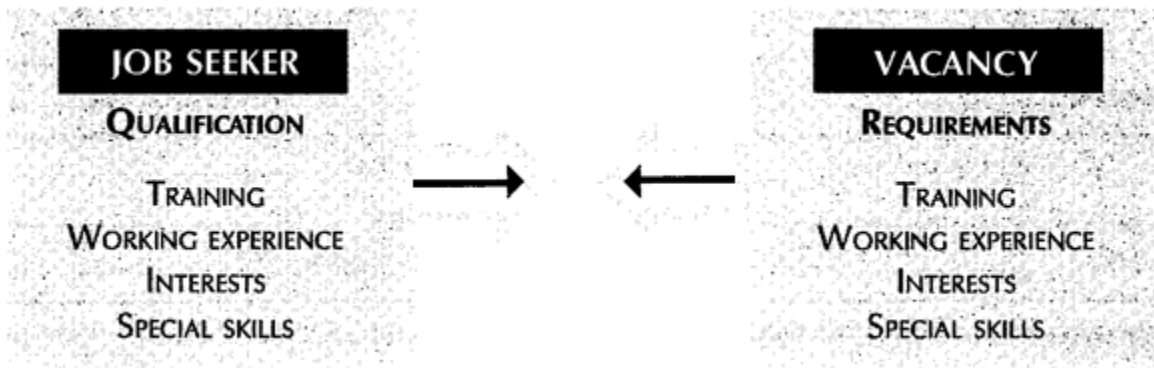
Other (medical coverage, pension fund etc.).....

Name submitted: When Placed?

.....

Matching

Successful matching is closely connected to the registration process. The employment officer can only judge the suitability of applicants if qualifications of job seekers and requirements for vacancies are known on a comparable basis. The following diagram reflects the need to gather similar information from job seekers and employers.



The matching can be oriented to the labour demand and try to fill a vacancy with the best candidate. It can also be oriented to the labour supply and try to find suitable jobs for the applicants in the register. Both systems have positive and negative aspects which will be described below. Whatever system is chosen the matching process starts with passing information on to either side. If found to be a suitable candidate, the job seeker is informed about the proposal for placement in person, by letter or phone call depending on the communication infrastructure in a given country. The application papers have to be sent to the employer and an interview between the two has to be arranged. The employment service has no influence on whether an employment contract is made between the parties and which conditions it contains.

The employer in turn is requested to report back to the employment service about the results of the process. This information is important for statistical purposes but also for reviewing the placement procedure and analysing why it was a success or a failure.

Demand- or supply-oriented matching systems

The two approaches to matching are called demand- and supply-oriented system. In short, the matching process is initiated from the side of the vacancy when using the demand-orientation and from the side of the job seekers when using the supply-orientation. The choice between the two systems is mostly an organisational one and depends largely on the size of the labour administration and the situation of the labour market in a given country. A demand-orientation depends on a large register of job seekers and on the regular publication of vacancies. For successful supply-orientated matching, it is necessary to have many vacancies available immediately. Employment officers in their daily work often combine the two approaches.

Even a relatively small administration can achieve good matching results using the demand-oriented system if it is ensured that vacancies are properly communicated to the applicants. The easiest way to provide this information is of course to use computers. The computer automatically matches the details of a vacancy against the register of job seekers and lists possible candidates. In bigger administrations this can even be done on a self-service basis where applicants can inform themselves about the requirements of a vacancy. In cases where computers are not available, as in most of the Public Employment Services in Africa, usually a notice board is used. The announcements have to be updated regularly and the information sent out to other employment centres in the country. Nevertheless, the notice board should not be the final point of the matching activities as it is not an end in itself. Bearing in mind that the objective is to actually place a suitable candidate, employment officers need to take complementary action. In this regard a well-maintained register along the lines described in this handbook plays an important role. The officer identifies possible candidates and sends the shortlist to the employer who will arrange for a personal interview. Additionally, the possibility of counselling should be offered. Even if a job seeker might find all information about a vacancy on the notice board, questions about qualifications and requirements as well as the application procedures might remain and have to be addressed by the employment officer.

The supply-oriented matching system appears to be only recommended for bigger labour administrations and in countries where the labour market offers many vacancies. In order to achieve satisfactory results a higher number of staff is needed as the process tries to find the job vacancy that matches best with a given application. The system is generally judged as being comparatively inefficient. Since in most African countries the preconditions are not given, the demand-driven approach is prevalent here and also seems to be more appropriate.

As it turns out, both systems depend on proper registration of vacancies and job seekers and on a basic infrastructure for the mailing of letters. While the former is to a large extent the result of the efforts of the employment services staff themselves one has to acknowledge the problems in some African countries with regard to their postal system. Nevertheless, successful matching is dependent on a way of communicating documents across the country. A time lag of a few days

would probably not hamper the placement efforts for higher-qualified jobs as an immediate decision is usually not required.

Comprehensive Placement Services

The Information Function

Public Employment Services rely on well-organised basic placement services to fulfill their information function inside and outside the administration. The importance of comprehensive and regularly up-dated data about job seekers and vacancies gathered through placement activities can not be stressed often enough. The next step is then to draw conclusions and develop qualitative statements. Especially in the difficult situation of most African employment services, this is the opportunity to regain a position as the most reliable and knowledgeable contact with regard to the labour market.

The labour market is not easy to monitor and it is constantly in motion. As a result, the administration can only take decisions on adequate labour market policies if properly informed about imbalances and problems. Furthermore, the complex structure of political interaction has a major impact on the labour market, i.e. social and fiscal policy, the health sector, research and development. Therefore, there exists a much broader interest in labour market information, above and beyond the scope of labour administration.

On the other hand, labour market information is also essential for successful placement work and for the improvement of employment officers involved. Only with comprehensive information and background knowledge, they can give qualified advice to job seekers and employers about the labour market, its trends and opportunities. This involves questions about the current and future demand and supply of labour, the various skills and occupations in different sectors of the economy and about the conditions of work. The constant effort that is needed to acquire the necessary knowledge and to catch up with latest developments indicates that the results of the basic services in terms of data are only the "raw material" for a more comprehensive stage of data processing.

Job Canvassing and Marketing

Job canvassing and marketing is another element of comprehensive services. It results from and depends on solid and motivated placement work. It will be further facilitated through the availability of qualitative information, as this is an important element in counselling and negotiations with the employers.

Canvassing always has two sides. For the employment officer the contact with the employers reveals important information about the labour market and in particular the labour demand. Knowledge about the specific situation of the enterprise leads to opportunities for placement of suitable job seekers even if vacancies are not or not yet announced. In Africa, where the notification of vacancies is mostly not mandatory, close contact with the employers offers the only possibility to increase the "market share" of Public Employment Services and to place registered job seekers.

The employers must at the same time also gain something from the contact. Trained officers are needed for the professional presentation of the services provided and for the follow-up through visits and intense communication. The employers have to be convinced that it will be advantageous to use the employment service. This includes suitable candidates to fill vacancies but also labour market information that helps in making business decisions.

The relationship between employment officers and employers can be very informal when it comes to job canvassing. It is of mutual benefit if the cooperation works well. Thus, officers should avoid combining canvassing with labour inspection. Unfortunately, this often happens in African countries when due to a lack of personnel labour officers perform both tasks. But it should be kept in mind that canvassing efforts can be spoiled because the relationship between employers and inspectors is naturally completely different.

Service Orientation

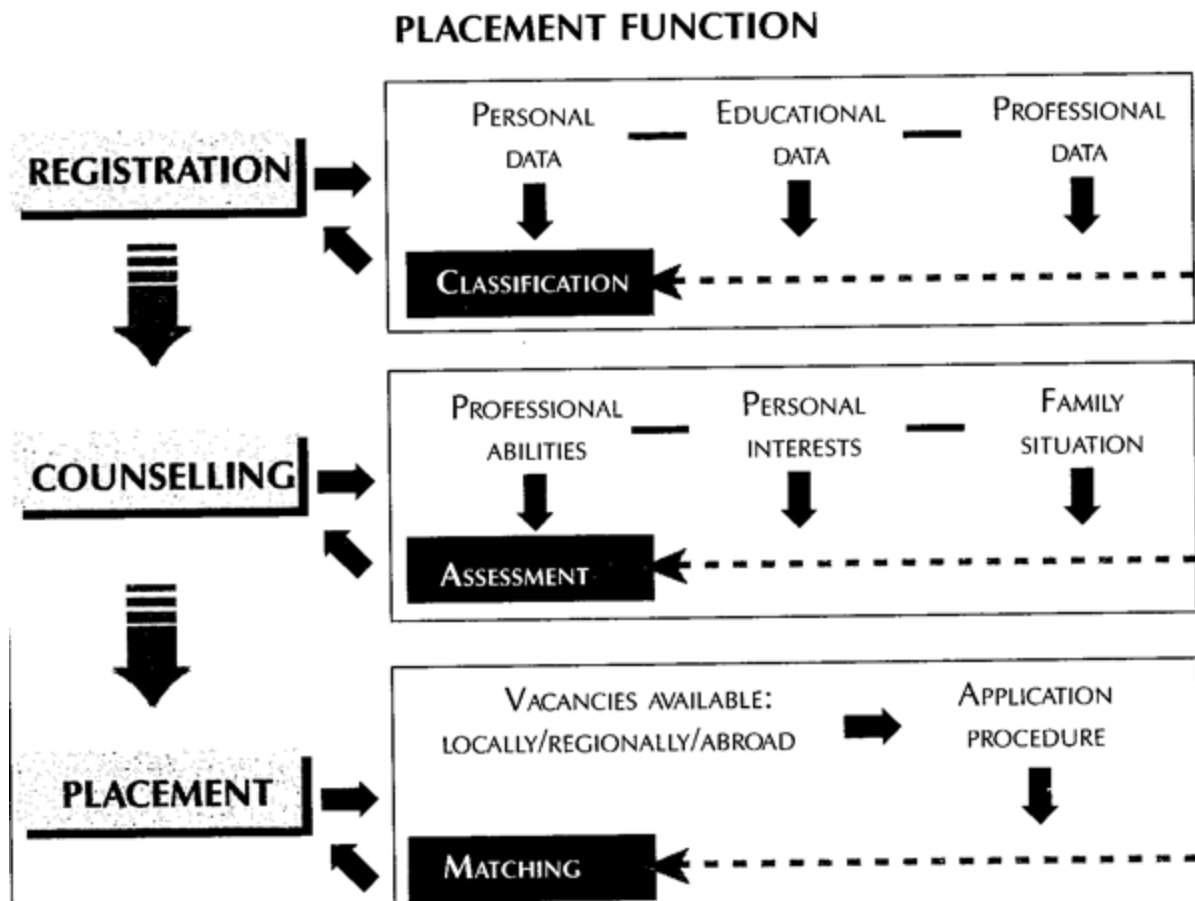
The need for a service orientation surfaces quite often throughout this handbook. It should of course be linked to all activities of Public Employment Services as a basic feature. In fact it is not common at all and rather characterises an advanced stage in administrative reform processes. The current status of employment services in most African countries does not encourage the idea. It might seem inappropriate to talk about a service culture when even basic infrastructure is missing in the administration concerned. On the other hand, it could be a good starting point to demonstrate that the personnel is motivated and willing to move forward with the modernisation of the services.

For successful placement work, service orientation is almost a necessary condition. The close contact with the employers as described under "Job Canvassing" implies that the employer is treated like a client whose needs and wishes determine to a certain extent the daily work of employment officers. The same is valid for job seekers who should get full attention and be treated with courtesy.

Service orientation makes the difference between a static and a progressing, developing administration. This can be seen in all the details starting from the registration process. The registration of vacancies but particularly of job seekers can either be done with minimum effort or very carefully and comprehensively. As a result of this "choice" the matching will be more or less successful. In the latter case, the justification of a weak labour market will always be at hand. This does not mean that only having a proper register will inevitably result in an increase in matching numbers. But it can be said that the probability of better matching results rises the more detailed and looked after the register is. Also, job canvassing can of course be done at a minimum standard, especially since a specific number of visits and contacts is normally not obligatory. But active job canvassing can have the most decisive impact both on the information base of employment officers and on the success of their placement work. It offers a chance to improve the image of Public Employment Services substantially.

Service orientation will definitely be facilitated through a conducive working environment and depends on the availability of simple communication and transport facilities. Also the training

needs of the staff should be considered. Nevertheless, the fundamental element for service orientation remains the attitude of the staff.



V. The Vocational Information and Guidance Function

What is the Objective of Vocational Information and Guidance (VIG)?

The objective of vocational information and guidance is to improve the information basis of job seekers and employers, enabling them to make the best possible decisions for their working life or the staff development of their company.

The target group includes workers at all stages of working life, especially job seekers, as well as employers. They should be informed and counselled as competently and comprehensively as possible in order to reduce the insecurity that comes with unemployment and is inherent in career or personnel decisions.

In order to achieve the objective, Public Employment Services provide:

- information about occupations, i.e. contents, working conditions and training opportunities for job seekers

- individual guidance and counselling on career decisions and occupational choices for job seekers with the aim of:
 - clarifying their skills and personal characteristics
 - setting goals for career development
 - developing viable strategies to achieve these goals
- information about labour market developments for interested employers and counselling in personnel decisions.

This is an ambitious approach especially for African countries where there are large differences in the educational and professional background of the clients. This is due to different factors. Illiteracy is a widespread problem. It also has to be taken into account whether people come from urban or rural areas as this influences their access to education, training and skilled jobs. Thus, special attention has to be given to the implementation of the information and guidance function to match both the characteristics of the target group and the status of employment services in Africa.

Relevance and Constraints of Vocational Information and Guidance in Africa

The relevance of VIG is often disputed in times of economic hardship that are characterised by retrenchments rather than by increasing numbers of vacancies. The following and similar questions are therefore often asked in developing countries: What are the vocational choices that are worth informing the public about? Why give career counselling to people who sometimes do not even have job security for the next month?

It is true that the economic changes taking place in Africa today bring insecurity and uncertainty for each individual. If it is not the downsizing of staff that affects the workers, it is the changing demand of companies concerning the skills and knowledge of their staff. Whether employed or unemployed and looking for a new job, people are faced with the demand for highly educated motivated workers with a high-quality vocational training background.

Vocational Information and Guidance does not provide a blueprint for the adjustment of human resources to changing labour demand. It helps people find information about occupations and training possibilities that are otherwise hard for the individual to gather. It helps people to come up with a clear picture of what they are and what they want and it shows ways of achieving these goals. Based on this understanding, it appears that especially in difficult times there is great need for vocational information and guidance. It is often difficult to find the way back into employment but it certainly is even harder without any information and without any strategy.

Not only retrenched workers are in need of information. At all stages of their working life people have to make decisions. School and university graduates need to be informed about the labour market sectors that are saturated and those that might offer employment opportunities in future.

The same is true for people who think about self-employment. But there are also workers who want to make a career move like getting promoted or broadening their technical knowledge. They need to know which steps are necessary and where they can get the training.

Thus, the constraints regarding vocational information and guidance are not related to the role of this function in times of economic change or crisis. On the contrary, as shown above, the need for this type of assistance might even grow at those times. The constraints rather emerge out of the weak financial and human resources of Public Employment Services in most African countries. The staff is often occupied with registration and has no additional capacity for information activities let alone specially trained staff for counselling sessions.

Given this background and the situation in the countries as described above, it seems more realistic to think about alternatives. Both the scarce resources of the employment services and the needs of the clients should be taken into account. One possibility is to set priorities and focus on one or few groups for a certain period of time. These could be workers facing retrenchment or school and university graduates. At a later stage extension of services to the rural areas might be considered. Information needed by these groups would most probably be related to possibilities for training - either within their present or for a new occupation _ and to advice for self-employment as another option.

Possibilities for training:

What kind of training is suitable and needed given the background of the workers?

At which training institutions or schools can this training be obtained?

What are the enrollment procedures or where is this information available?

Advice on self-employment:

In which sector of the economy is it advisable to start a business?

Where to get comprehensive business start-up training?

How to acquire the necessary funds for starting a business?

This sketch of possible topics shows that it would be already quite a task for a small employment service to provide only this information in an updated and comprehensive manner. But it also shows that if resources are used for this function it can be done efficiently and in reaction to labour market problems prevailing in the respective countries. With this re-orientation of the vocational information and guidance function the people needing it most will be reached and the employment service will become a flexible and competent partner.

Activities for Vocational Information

In order to provide job seekers with information about occupations and training opportunities and employers with trends in the labour market, an employment officer can undertake various activities, both inside and outside the employment service. The type of activity and coverage depends on the target group, the type of vocational information needed, and the resources available. The following are just a few examples:

Inside the employment service:

- lectures about the labour market and its trends
- information events about specific occupations
- self-information facilities (where available).

Outside the employment service:

Target Group _ **Pupils**

- school visits
- job exhibitions
- working "try-outs"
- parents' evenings
- teachers' information

Target Group _ **Students/Graduates**

- lectures and presentations
- company contacts
- job exhibitions

Target Group _ **Retrenched workers**

- company visits
- group information/counselling

Target Group _ **Employers**

- frequent contacts with employers and company visits.

An employment officer can easily inform *pupils* about the different career choices by visiting their school or by organising job exhibitions and working arrangements. It is important that pupils are contacted early enough but at the latest when they are in their last school year.

For a presentation of different companies and occupations, a job exhibition is a useful event. There, the employers can be contacted directly by the pupils. The informal atmosphere facilitates this step. Working arrangements need more effort by the employment officer who will try to organise that pupils can work for a few weeks or even months in a company. This "try-out" offers them the possibility to get an inside view of a particular occupation, though they will

probably not be paid in most cases. Employers, on the other hand, get to know a potential future employee.

Parents and teachers also play an important role in the occupational decisions of children and should not be left out in the information activities.

Some events should therefore take place in the early evening to enable parents to attend. Teachers should be sensitised for the problems and encourage the schoolchildren to participate in information activities and to visit the employment service.

Students or graduates can also be reached by group events in their university or training institution. Most of them might still be undecided or uncertain on their future career and will find lectures about the current labour market situation helpful. For those who already know which job they would like, it will be more important to get assistance in the form of company contacts. A first step in this direction would be the organisation of a job exhibition. Further information and counselling can then take place in the employment service.

In order to facilitate the contact with *workers that are faced with retrenchment*, it seems advisable to hold at least the first information session in their company or organisation. The employment officer can get an impression of the number and background of the workers concerned. The officer at this stage can also give an overview of the labour market developments and hand out information about other vocational information sources like training institutions. A first counselling can possibly take place for groups of workers with similar expertise and continue on an individual level in the employment service.

Registered job seekers as well as other interested persons can of course be informed in the employment service. An overview of the labour market can easily be organised in the form of lectures, which take place on certain days and are open for every interested person. It gets more difficult when it comes to information about details of specific occupations. Services with enough resources might be in a position to acquire documentation for self-information. This would include standardised description cards giving information according to sectors and occupations as well as documentary films, slides and other media support. These facilities are not only helpful for the job seekers but also for the employment officer who cannot be expected to have complete knowledge about all occupations. Unfortunately, most African employment services do not have the necessary resources to sustain a self-information centre, a media room, or a library. Thus, in order to give information about specific occupations it might be the easiest to organise information events with a professional who has enough experience to make a presentation and answer questions concerning details of his/her occupation. Such events should be announced early enough through personal contacts with job seekers and on a notice board.

The best situation is one in which the employment officer has a permanent information exchange with *employers* anyway. However, additional activities in the form of information events can easily be organised. This could develop into a regular, e.g. monthly or quarterly, discussion forum for employers and would support efforts to strengthen the cooperation between the services and the private sector. At the same time, it is relatively easy to provide most of the data that employers are interested in as they emerge from the employment services work itself.

Vocational Guidance

Characteristics of the Function

Vocational Guidance has some distinct features and objectives although closely related to the information and placement functions. *The personal characteristics of the client and his or her particular wishes for future employment form the centre of vocational guidance.* Every other component is linked and directed to this.

For the information aspect this means that labour market *information will be broken down to an individual level.* Occupational information will be very specific and detailed for the occupation or group of occupations the client is interested in. Information on training will also be much more detailed and tailored to personal needs. A first result of counselling often is that the client becomes aware of different career options or occupational choices and starts a decision-making process.

The main difference between vocational information and guidance is that the latter constitutes a *two-way communication* between the employment officer and the client. Guidance can also take place in groups, especially at an early stage. The individual counselling then is a very *personal communication and social interaction.* The *employment officer's role is two fold.* On the one hand it is the role of a communication partner trying to encourage the expression of ideas and concerns and to develop individual problem solution strategies. On the other hand it is the role of an expert in the field of work and all related questions. Nowadays, the term "counselling" is usually preferred to "guidance" in order to stress the interactive aspect and self-help approach. Whatever term is used, it is important to acknowledge that the outcome of the guidance process is not already determined at its beginning.

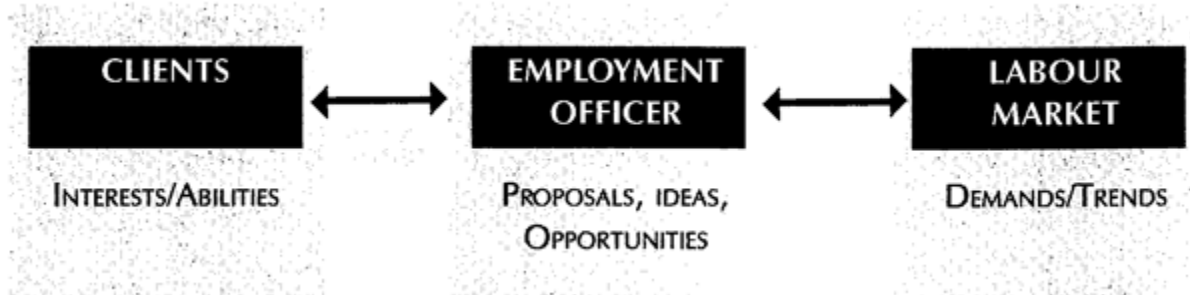
Vocational guidance is different from the placement function in the sense that placement work follows standardised procedures and includes only a few counselling aspects. These are mostly related to the question of whether the skills of the job seeker match the requirements of a specific vacancy. The outcome of the placement procedure is not the counselling but the placement of the job seeker. Vocational guidance instead does not follow a standard pattern. Some clients might have similar problems but they cope with them differently and they will need individual strategies to overcome them.

The guidance function certainly requires a highly motivated officer who has comprehensive knowledge of labour market data and trends for different occupations, economic sectors and regions of the country. Furthermore, the officer should preferably have psychological skills to assess the job seekers' physical and vocational capacity and to assist in the development of strategies. It certainly is an effort to keep up the required level of knowledge and to maintain contacts with the business community and training institutions. It also demands comparatively large resources, i.e. at least one full-time staff member, office space, and transport and communication facilities. But only with the necessary resources and with a dedicated officer will the guidance function be performed effectively.

The Process of Vocational Guidance

Vocational guidance concentrates on the *personal characteristics* of job seekers, i.e. their knowledge, skills, and interests. The employment officer helps to explore strengths and weaknesses against possible jobs or occupations. With the trend going more towards open communication, *interviews* are preferred to *tests* for the analysis of the personal background. Intelligence and mechanical tests might be helpful to a certain extent but they depend on a very limited number of characteristics and, thus, fully reflect neither skills nor personal expectations.

After having identified all relevant personal characteristics, the employment officer points out the *employment and training opportunities* that are suitable and available for the client. Starting with information on the labour market and its trends, this includes a presentation of working details of specific occupations and the training necessary to qualify for the job wanted. The officer only makes proposals and raises ideas to facilitate the decision-making process of the client. It is not the role of the employment service to make the final career decision. But vocational guidance helps to sharpen the personal profile and to get a clearer picture of the personal position and opportunities in the labour market.



Once the client has come to a decision about future career steps or job applications, the employment officer continues to assist in the implementation phase. A strategy has to be developed that appears to be viable after all factors have been considered. These are external factors like ability to get training in the country and personal factors like financial resources of the client and the family background. In cases where the client is the sole breadwinner, it might be problematic to undergo a lengthy training. The same applies to the long-term separation from the family in cases where the future job or training would not allow the client to stay at home.

In order to make the next steps, practical information is needed that is not available from official publications. Contacts with the business community and training institutions enable the officer to name contact persons and advise on how to approach the company or organisation best. Prior knowledge about necessary documents and enrollment procedures saves time and lessens uncertainty. The officer should assure the client of any further assistance if problems arise.

Practical Tips For The Interviewer

Create a pleasant atmosphere for the interview including:

- a quiet meeting place
- enough time

- a sitting arrangement next to and not opposite each other.

Develop the interview by:

LISTENING

...carefully and with patience

...to the client explaining the problem

ASKING

...questions that help the client to explore the problem

...open questions that cannot be answered by yes/no

GUIDING

...the client to stay with the most important topics

...the interview in the intended direction

CHECKING

...that the client understood what you said

...that you understood the client properly.

Ensure a proper follow-up by:

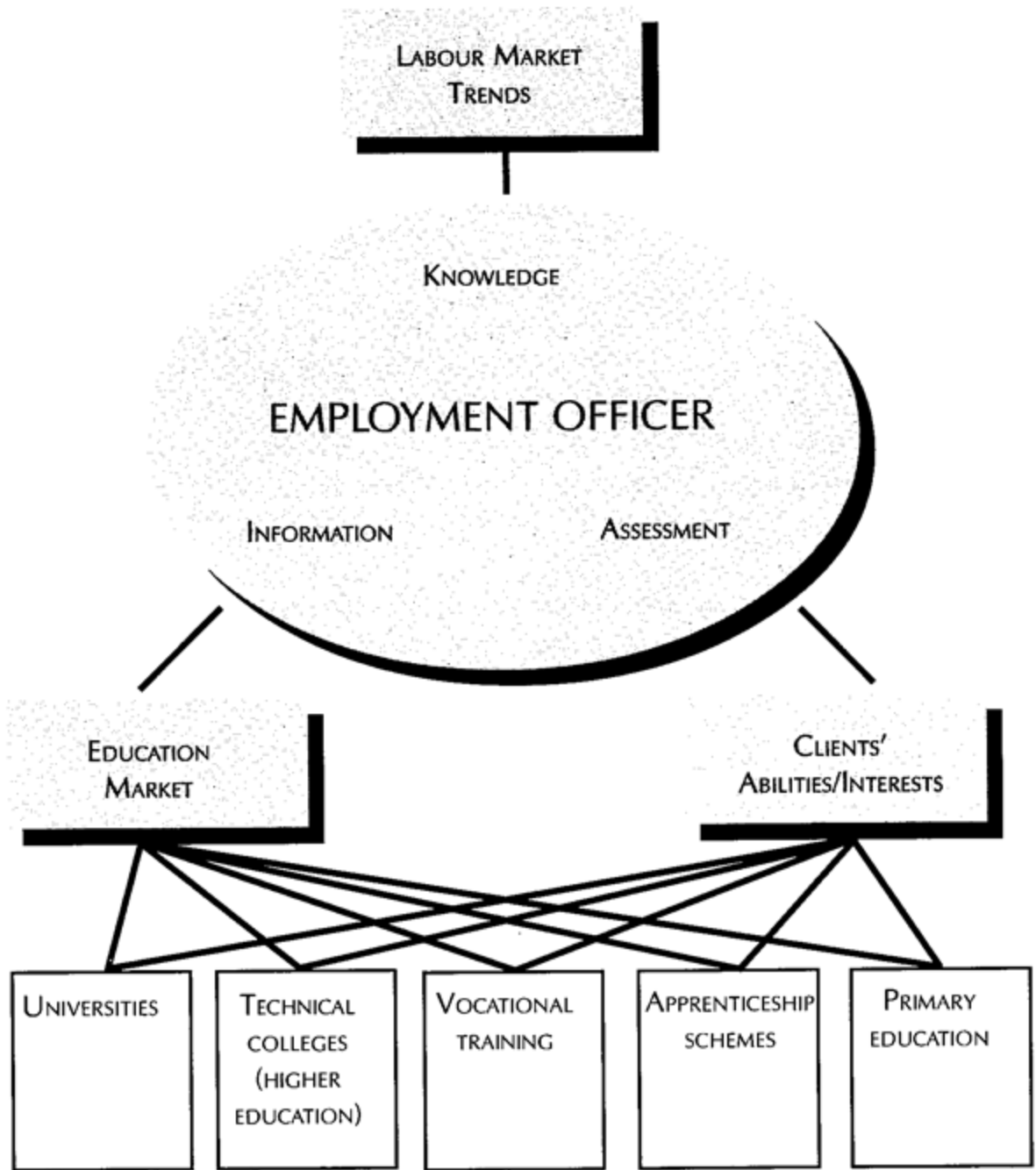
- making detailed notes after the interview when your memory is still fresh
- including necessary follow-up activities that you agreed upon with the client
- keeping the notes in a confidential register.

REMEMBER:

You do not decide for your clients.

You help your clients to make their own decisions.

VOCATIONAL INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FUNCTION



VI. The Labour Market Information Function

What is the Role of Public Employment Services within a Labour Market Information System (LMIS)?

The role of Public Employment Services within a LMIS is twofold. They are both users and providers of labour market information. It is mainly the data from placement activities but also from vocational guidance and counselling activities that are collected and presented by the PES. The question remains to what extent the employment services are able and willing to take a leading role in the system of institutions providing LMI.

Public Employment Services are both users and providers within a LMIS. As users, they need information on labour demand and supply for efficient placement services. They also need information on skill needs and supply in order to provide meaningful vocational guidance and counselling services. Their role as provider of LMI is described in Article 6c of the ILO Convention Nr. 88 on Employment Services. Public Employment Services shall thereafter "...collect and analyse, in co-operation where appropriate with other authorities and with management and trade unions, the fullest available information on the situation of the employment market and its probable evolution [...] and make such information available systematically and promptly to the public authorities, the employers' and workers' organisations concerned, and the general public...".

To sum it up, employment services are supposed **to collect, analyse and supply** data on the status of the labour market and its trends in cooperation with other authorities.

The cooperation aspect mentioned in the convention has to be stressed since quite often PES are not in a position to provide all the necessary information. In that case, they could rather act as a focal point, motivating other organisations to collect and provide additional information and combining it with the data they can provide themselves.

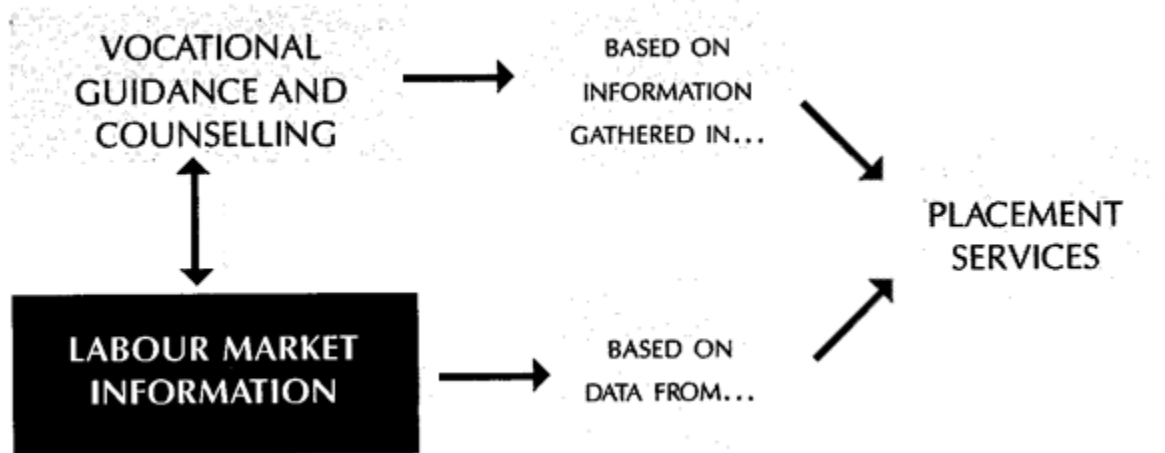
It is mainly the data from placement activities, i.e. about job seekers, vacancies and matching results that are collected and presented by the PES. The usual breakdown for registered unemployed is by:

- region
- profession
- age
- sex
- foreign/migrant workers.

The employment services are, furthermore, able to provide stock as well as flow figures for either a point of time, e.g. at the end of each month, or a period of time for the effective analysis of trends. Vocational guidance and counselling activities reveal some information, e.g. on training activities and occupational preferences of job seekers although they "cannot always be quantified" (Ricca 1994: 38). Additional information could comprise data on:

- overall employment
- working force (potential)
- seasonal influences
- training activities
- number of graduates.

The labour market information function is not separated from the other functions of Public Employment Services. On the contrary, it is closely linked to the guidance function and depends also on data from the placement services as shown in the diagram below:



The question remains to what extent the employment services are able and willing to take a leading role in a LMIS. At the "International Symposium on the Role and Organisation of Employment Services" (Nuremberg, 1986), two typical scenarios were identified. In the first scenario, the PES restrict themselves to the collection and analysis of data from their placement, guidance and other activities and hand them over to "outside bodies". These bodies then combine the data with information from other institutions and "provide as global an overall picture as possible of the functioning of the labour market" (ILO 1987: 56).

In the second scenario, employment services go one step further and collect and analyse additional data from other sources: "In such case, they can claim to be the lead interpreters of the national labour situation and establish a predominant position [...] in their knowledge of job and labour market phenomena" (ibid). A more realistic possibility in the African context might be that the ministries of labour take the lead role. A substantial part of the work might then be assigned to the PES with the assistance of the statistical department. This option appears to be more realistic, since the employment services themselves rarely have the staff or the resources necessary to cope with such a task on their own. Nevertheless, the second scenario offers a way of improving the image of Public Employment Services inside the ministry and towards the public, especially the social partners. It might be the starting point to escape the vicious circle of dwindling resources and lack of support that many employment services find themselves in.

Basic Characteristics of a Labour Market Information System (LMIS)

This brief outline of basic characteristics of a LMIS starts with a definition of labour market information and the most important types of information. Concerning the actors in such a system it is necessary to list both providers and users of information as well as the purposes of the latter. Finally, a sketch of the main problems of LMIS in English-speaking Africa is given.

What is Labour Market Information (LMI)?

Jones (1980: 37) gives the following practical definition of labour market information: "*Any information concerning the size and composition of the labour market or any part of the labour market, the way it or any part of it functions, its problems, the opportunities which may be available to it, and the employment-related intentions or aspirations of those who are part of it.*" Subsequently, a labour market information system is the network of labour market related institutions and persons that is producing LMI with its entities relying on each other.

Types of Information

There are different types of labour market information, largely determined by the number and nature of actors in the system and with regard to content and detail demanded. Nevertheless, the following categories represent the most important types of labour market information:

- employment, unemployment and underemployment - current levels, composition and trends both in the formal and informal sector
- manpower - surpluses and shortages
- skills - supply and demand
- wage levels and working conditions
- vacancies and qualifications of job-seekers
- occupational information.

Providers of LMI

The main providers of LMI are government ministries, especially those dealing with labour and social affairs, education, planning, and economic and development matters. Other providers are, for example, the Central Statistical Offices, employers' and workers' organisations as well as the increasingly important private employment agencies.

Users and Purposes of LMI

According to Richter (1989) the main users and their purposes of LMI are:

- **national policy makers and planners** ...to build strategies and policies for influencing the labour market
- **employers' and workers' organisations** ...to formulate policies for collective bargaining processes and wage negotiations
- **educational and vocational training planners** ...to relate manpower development programmes to assessed requirements
- **vocational guidance and orientation services** ...to provide meaningful vocational guidance and career orientation
- **employment services** ...to accelerate matching processes
- **the wider public** ...to facilitate informed and rational choices in the search for employment.

Problems of LMIS in English-speaking Africa

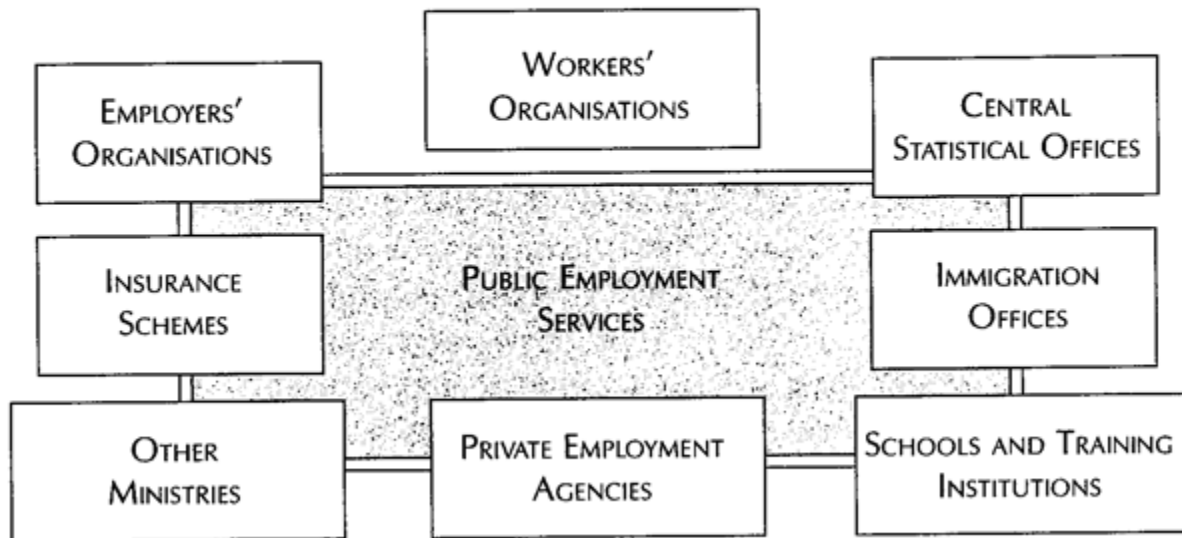
Problems of LMIS are similar in most countries of English-speaking Africa:

- delays in processing and publication of data
- lack of coordination between the producers of LMI
- lack of information about the informal sector and sometimes about the rural areas
- incomplete, unreliable data
- shortage of funds, equipment and qualified personnel
- absence of political support.

Some of the above mentioned problems arise from certain features of the African labour markets, such as:

- the high incidence of subsistence activities and own-account, casual and unpaid household labour (ILO 1982: 15)
- seasonal nature of work, especially in the agricultural sector
- high incidence of multiple activities and underemployment
- labour market fragmentation.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND OTHER PROVIDERS OF LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION



PROVIDERS	EXAMPLES OF DATA
CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICES	Results of surveys, censuses etc.
IMMIGRATION OFFICES	Data on migrant workers
SCHOOLS AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS	Data on graduates and curricula
OTHER MINISTRIES	Data from administrative records

INSURANCE SCHEMES	Population figures; data on occupational safety and health
EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS	Numbers, details of establishments
WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS	Data on the workforce, retrenchment figures etc.
PRIV. EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES	Different administrative data
PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	Situation/trends on the labour market

BASIC STRUCTURE OF LABOUR MARKET REPORTS

Breakdown for all five categories by:

Region

Profession

Age

Sex

Nationality

1. Total number of employed persons (estimated)

2. Number of unemployed:

- Flow figures: new registrations
- for the current month
- since beginning of the year
- Stock figures: registrations at the end of month/quarter/year

3. Unemployment rate in reference to the labour force*

4. Notified vacancies (preferably including data from private employment agencies)

- Flow figures: new notifications
- for the current month
- since beginning of the year
- Stock figures: notified vacancies at the end of month/quarter/year

5. Placements (preferably including data from private employment agencies)

- Flow figures: filled vacancies
- for the current month
- since beginning of the year

* The ILO uses three criteria for the restricted definition of unemployment:

A person is not working, wants to work and is available to work, and has taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment.

Providing Labour Market Information

Labour market information can be provided on the basis of data collection, data analysis, and the presentation of results. Following this order, the different steps are described in this chapter. Data collection has to follow specific procedures and remain focussed on the purpose of the exercise in order to obtain the intended results. Once the information is collected it needs to be interpreted to translate the "raw material" into meaningful statements and statistics. Finally, the results have to be presented to the different users and the general public on a regular basis.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis are the first steps in providing LMI. But before the collection of information itself can start, some questions have to be answered. What is the purpose of this particular data collection? Which sources are available to generate information? What are the procedures of data collection and analysis?

What is the Purpose of the Specific Data Collection Exercise?

For the collection of labour market data it is essential to define a clear purpose in order to avoid unnecessary work and expenditures. Depending on the user, the interest might be focused on a specific sector of the economy, on a particular industry, or on a population group. This is also valid for Public Employment Services and their daily work. They need comprehensive data on job seekers and vacancies in order to improve and accelerate their matching processes. They also need up-to-date information on the overall skill demand in the country and on training opportunities to provide meaningful vocational guidance and counselling.

As provider of LMI, employment services have to define the purpose of their data collection as well, although in most cases resources are not available to serve different demands. Still, before providing information the employment service has to be clear about the needs of its clients. Looking at the target group, it has to be decided what kind of information should be presented and in which breakdown. The general public is most probably interested in a broad labour market overview whereas experts from other ministries or training institutes request specific information. The way of presenting data might also differ keeping in mind the expertise of the target group concerning the topic.

Which Sources are Available to Generate Information?

The most important sources to generate data for the analysis of the labour market are:

- censuses
- surveys
- administrative records.

Censuses, like population and housing censuses, have the broadest coverage and are an important source for demographic data. Since they are only carried out rarely, usually about once in ten years, information from censuses can only be used as a baseline and not for up-to-date labour

market information. Thus, the disadvantages of a census are its high costs, its irregularity and the political sensitivity.

Surveys, which rely on samples, cover different aspects of the economy and are carried out more regularly than a census, some even monthly. Usually, there are surveys on the labour force, on households and living standards, establishments or particular industries etc. Although surveys can also be costly and may have sampling errors, they are the main tools to generate frequent and relatively reliable data.

Administrative records are provided at low cost by different institutions like employment services, immigration offices, insurance schemes, schools and training institutes, workers' and employers' organisations or public service commissions. However, data from these institutions are often not comparable and seldom collected in a systematic and regular manner. Bearing in mind the question of reliability, these records can nevertheless give at least an indication of certain developments.

Public Employment Services as users of LMI need all the above mentioned sources to complete and update their information base. This is especially the case for vocational guidance and counselling services where employment services heavily depend on outside information. Records from schools, training institutes and workers' and employers' organisations need to be complemented by regular personal contacts between the employment officer and the relevant staff in these institutions. Only then is it possible to obtain a current and comprehensive picture of the situation and to advise job seekers competently in turn.

As suppliers of information, employment services use their own administrative records mainly from placement activities and based on the register of job seekers, vacancies and matching results. The reliability depends on the attention with which the register has been organised and looked after. The use of a standardised occupational classification system plays a key role in this regard as outlined in chapter IV. It increases the reliability of data and allows comparisons based on fixed categories instead of approximations. If the register is also checked and updated regularly, automatically employment services are in a position where they can be a major source of detailed, frequent data on the employment and unemployment situation in a country.

Concerning the quality of information from administrative procedures, employment services have a good reputation as their work depends to a large extent on the quality of their own data. For a successful placement service the employment officer needs to know as many details as possible about job seekers and vacancies. On the other hand, "the quality of the recorded information will also depend on whether mistakes in the initial recordings are in fact corrected on the files when they are discovered" (Hoffmann 1995: 8). An example of this is again found in the placement service: "If a satisfactory job (candidate) is found for a job seeker (vacancy), then an original mistake in the occupational code is not likely to be corrected, as to do so will have no 'practical' usefulness" (ibid).

What are the Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis?

The easiest and cheapest starting point for employment services to produce labour market information is their own operational procedures. Placement is the traditional source of in-house information. This needs to be complemented by linking up with related institutions for a regular exchange of information. The data produced is not self-explanatory and needs interpretation and analysis. The scope and detail of the final statistics depends on the availability of resources.

As concerns the **registered unemployed persons** (job seekers), comprehensive information is given on their registration cards:

- profession/qualifications
- sex
- age
- nationality
- region.

As concerns **vacancies and placements**, information is gathered through the registration of vacancies upon notification and through the compulsory report by employer and job seeker about the placement result:

- profession/qualifications required
- contract duration
- wage level
- region.

The information about the regional distribution makes it relatively easy to give the breakdown for the **national and regional level**.

Furthermore, employment services can provide:

- **stock figures** that reflect the status at a certain point of time, e.g. the total number of job seekers and vacancies each day, month, or year
- **flow figures** that describe operations during a period of time to inform about the dynamics of the labour market.

The analysis of all the information results in statistical tables, estimates, and percentages. The purpose is "to have these tables produced regularly over time so as to generate a time series for effective analysis of trends and patterns" (Young 1993: 6). Scope and detail vary with the (non-) availability of material and personal resources that are scarce in most African employment services. Nevertheless, a basic report can rather easily be compiled that gives an indication about "the volume, duration and evolution of unemployment (by age of job seekers, geographical area or occupation), the areas of a country where unemployment is highest, the occupations in which it is difficult to find a job, the age at which young people enter the labour market according to their skills etc." (Ricca 1994: 37f.) A similar analysis can be done for the labour supply.

An assessment of the given limitations will reveal whether additional data can be gathered continuously. In many cases information is readily available elsewhere. One example is the

company or establishment register that could be part of the employment services' files but most often is not. Instead it can probably be found with the employers' organisations, the Chambers of Commerce or Factory Inspectorates. An establishment register does not only provide numbers and names of contact persons but also gives details about occupations, wage levels and working conditions. It is equally important for placement and guidance work as for statistical purposes. Another example is the information about types of training offered and the number of graduates that is available from schools and training institutes. The employment officer involved with vocational guidance can simply use the already established contacts to collect this data on a regular basis. It would improve the quality of the guidance services especially as regards future career prospects.

The informal sector plays an increasingly important role for African labour markets but its structure and employment effects are virtually unknown in statistical terms. It is a political decision whether employment services start getting active in this huge market place for jobs and job seekers. Presently, they only deal with the formal sector. Equipped as they are with minimal resources, they would not be in a position to produce a work-intensive informal sector analysis. At the same time there are methodological problems of data collection, mainly problems of applying common analysis patterns given the complex and heterogeneous nature of economic activities.

Instead of working according to conventional statistical methods, information about the informal sector has to be collected from many different sources and put together like a mosaic for analysis. Informal sector associations and a growing number of special surveys are important data sources, although often confined to single branches and differing in data quality. The key informant approach can be used especially at local level. This method relies on a network of well-informed persons who are approached to share their knowledge about a range of employment issues. Information provided has, of course, to be counterchecked and verified with other sources. On a national scale, population censuses and household surveys might contain some relevant data which can be attributed to the growing interest in the informal sector.

Presentation of Labour Market Information

Following data collection and analysis, labour market information has to be presented in a form that meets the demand of users and can easily be understood. Under current conditions there are three types of reports that can be produced by Public Employment Services in most English-speaking African countries: monthly reports to present the activities of the employment services; quarterly reports to give an analysis of labour market situation and trends; annual reports as a tool for reviewing and forecasting labour market developments.

Monthly reports as statistical reflections of employment services operations

Monthly reports reflect the activities of the employment services and can be presented in the form of statistical tables. To be of any use they have to be produced in time and regularly. They build the basis for the quarterly reports.

Quarterly reports as analysis of the labour market situation and trends

Quarterly reports give a detailed picture of the current labour market situation and trends. They depend on the monthly statistical tables that are reviewed and commented on in a narrative form. The objective is to analyse the usual operations of employment services and the problems they encounter. Events that affect the labour market situation need to be covered as well. They refer to the legislative background, to political decisions or to economic changes like new industrial settlements or mass retrenchments.

Annual reports as tools for reviewing and forecasting labour market developments

Annual reports are the most comprehensive form of the three proposed reporting types. They deal with the overall employment situation and present an analysis for different economic sectors, occupational groups, and regions of the respective country. Nevertheless, if the monthly and quarterly reports are produced regularly and additional information can be obtained from other sources, it should be possible for employment services to compile an annual report on this basis.

Labour market reports have to keep their *systematic* pattern.

An analysis is only possible if the basic categories and definitions remain the same.

Labour market reports need to be collected *regularly*.

Time series as well as trend forecasts depend on complete and uninterrupted reporting.

Labour market reports have to be published *timely*.

Information becomes increasingly useless with every day its publication is delayed.

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