

## Employment Challenges in 2023

At the dawn of the year 2023, expectations are running high that an increase in the national economic growth will be realized. Based on this, it is reasonable to conclude that there will be an acceleration in business activities, and a consequence improvement in the unemployment figures. This optimism comes against the threat of a predicated on going global recession. The focus of economic and fiscal matters, tend to give the impression that these two things are all important to national development. The importance placed on economic growth is understandable inasmuch that countries depend on revenues generated to provide public goods and services. In these trying economic times, governments seemingly have a greater awareness of the need to meet the social needs of their citizens. Generally, education, healthcare, social protection and housing are expected to remain amongst the priorities of governments.

The discussion on economic growth becomes insignificant, if there are no serious policy initiatives and action plans that are directed at facilitating the creation and establishment of new businesses ventures and business opportunities. This is fundamental development which is required, if the world wide growing unemployment problem is to be successfully tackled. This is supported by the view of economists, who posit that economic growth is the basis for the generation of job opportunities. With this being the case, it becomes clear that there should be a growing demand for labour. It is baffling why there is now the human cry about a shortage of labour being experienced in the major productive sectors.

Prior to the world being overtaken by the COVID 19 pandemic, the world enjoyed a high density workforce. Even before the arrival of the dreaded COVID 19 pandemic, governments and big businesses, embarked on a programme of laying off and retrenching workers. It would now appear that that practice initiated under the disguise of modernization, has backfired. Many who were once employed have decided not to return to the traditional workplace. There is a dilemma for private sector employers and governments, who have resorted to move away from employment based on tenure to that of contract employment. With the understanding that the intention behind this move was that of reducing recurring operation expenditures, it is left to determine whether this has contributed to an overall decline in worker productivity. It is possible that this may be so, and moreover, fuelled by the absence of incentivization programmes for employees who are engaged on a fixed term contract, without any guarantee of renewal.

In reviewing the state of play, it would seem that workers have become disenchanted with the disparities which exists in the wages and salaries that are paid. The removal of job benefits and proposed changes to the social security benefits and retirement pensions schemes, do not entice workers to commit to spending years of service in the employ of any one organization. The introduction of contract employment which on the surface appears to be attractive, is slowly

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becoming under the microscope, as the reality of having a job today and none tomorrow, starts to hit home.

It would seem that the downside of the experiment of working to attract and recruit younger workers while replacing those with years of work experience, is accounting for the decline in output and in some cases quality service. If it is that the intention is to attract workers at lower wages and salaries, then employers should be conscious that there is a price to be paid for this. Whereas the engagement of young workers is to be encouraged, it is recommended that there employers put in place a plan for their integration into the operation of the enterprise or organization, for the purpose of ensuring that productivity, sustainability and efficiency are maintained

With many young and experienced persons now unemployed and looking for a job, it is ludicrous to hear a claim being made that there are employment shortages being experienced in some sectors. Is it that the job offers are unattractive as employers seek to take advantage of the large pool of labour on the market? If it is that the intention is to attract cheap and short term labour, then maybe this is what lies at the root of the problem in solving the unemployment problem.