
macroeconomía del desarrollo

Flexible Labour Markets, Workers' Protection and Active Labour Market Policies in the Caribbean

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UNITED NATIONS



Economic Development Division

Santiago de Chile, July 2009

This document has been prepared by Professor Andrew S. Downes, Consultant of the Division of Economic Development, ECLAC, within the activities of the project “Cooperation Agreement between the Embassy of Brazil in Chile, the Embassy of Denmark in Chile and ECLAC ‘Labour Markets, Workers’ Protection and Lifelong Learning of the Labour Force in a Global Economy: Latin American and Caribbean Experiences and Perspectives” (BDE/07/001).

The author would like to acknowledge the useful comments provided by Jurgen Weller and Esteban Perez on the first draft of this study. The key informants in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago also provided valuable information on various aspects of the labour market in the respective countries. Doris Downes and Maria Canales rendered useful assistance with the preparation of this final version.

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United Nations Publication
ISSN printed version 1680-8843 ISSN online version 1680-8851
ISBN: 978-92-1-121706-3
LC/L.3063-P
Sales No.: E.09.II.G.59
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Printed in United Nations, Santiago, Chile

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List of Abbreviations

ACTT	Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago
ALMPs	Active Labour Market Policies
BCC	Barbados Community College
BIMAP	Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity
BVTB	Barbados Vocational Training Board
CA	Competitive Advantage
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDA	Competitive Disadvantage
CEPEP	Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program
GATE	Government Assistance for Tertiary Education
HDI	Human Development Index
HEART	Human Employment and Resource Training
HYPE	Helping You Prepare for Employment
JAMAL	Jamaican Movement for Advancement of Literacy
JFLL	Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LRIDA	Labour Relations and Industrial Disputes Act
MIMIC	Multiple Indicators and Multiple Causes
MuST	Multi-sector Skills Training

MYPART	Military-led Youth Apprenticeship Re-orientation Training
NES	National Employment Service
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
NTA	National Training Agency
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OSCRC	One Stop Career Resource Centre
PATH	Program for Advancement of Health and Education
PCW	Pinelands Creative Workshop
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment Recognition
T & T	Trinidad and Tobago
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
URP	Unemployment Relief Program
YTEPP	Youth Training and Employment Partnership Program

Abstract

This study examines the application of the flexicurity labour system in the Caribbean countries of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The flexicurity system has its origins in Denmark and combines elements of labour market flexibility with social security for workers. After outlining the elements of the system, the study provides an overview of the labour market in the Caribbean and compares the performance of Denmark with the three Caribbean countries. The comparison shows that there is a much lower level of flexibility and security in the three Caribbean states than in Denmark. The degree of labour market flexibility is examined in the Caribbean context and the discussion indicates that some limited degree of flexibility exist especially work time and functional flexibility. Some attempts have been made to introduce financial flexibility. Some small measure of social protection exists for displaced workers in the form of severance and redundancy pay. Only Barbados has an unemployment scheme which cover workers for up to six months of unemployment. Jamaica is planning to introduce an unemployment assistance scheme. In general, the social protection schemes for workers are weak in the region. In the area of active labour market policies, training programs have been the main area of activity with some provision of employment services for those looking for jobs. All the countries have targeted young persons since these face the bulk of the unemployment in the region. Social dialogue has been developing in the countries with Barbados being at the forefront of this arrangement at the national level. Jamaica has adopted a sectoral approach. While that flexicurity system has some attractive features its full implementation is limited in the Caribbean since the institutional framework has not been fully developed to sustain the implementation of the system and the costs of the system can be a burden to national governments. It is however possible those elements of the system can be applied to the Caribbean countries (and have been applied). Labour market reform in the region can however take elements of the system into consideration.

1. Introduction

The small developing countries of the English-speaking Caribbean region are facing major economic challenges with the changes taking place in the global economy. The globalisation process (that is, the gradual integration of financial and commodity markets, the liberalization of trade in goods and services and the increasing importance of large transnational companies), the rapid development of information and communication technologies, coupled with the growth of knowledge and information industries, the changes in the demographic structure of countries with the general ageing of the population and the growing economic power of Brazil, Russia, India and China are making economic policy makers in small states reconsider the future economic trajectories for their countries. The current global financial and economic crisis has exacerbated the difficulties facing these small states.

In the Caribbean, there has been a return to strategic development planning with Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago producing strategic plans and Jamaica currently in the process of preparing its plan. As the international economy, within which these small states have to operate, becomes more competitive and demanding, their domestic economies will have to make rapid adjustments in order to meet the new demands of the international economy. Business enterprises will have to adopt agile and flexible production systems, governments would have to provide appropriate incentives and create a facilitating environment, while factor markets would have to be flexible and operate efficiently.

The operation of the labour market is expected to play a critical role in the economic adjustment process. The supply of labour will have to be available in the quantity and with the quality needed to meet production demands. In essence, the labour market would need to be flexible while at the same time safeguarding the interests of workers who would be affected by the rapid changes taking place on the demand side of the labour market. This requirement of the labour market in the Caribbean has been a challenging one given the institutional and structural elements which influence the labour market in the region.

In the formulation of policy measures, one approach is to examine the experience of other countries which have successfully tackled similar challenges, that is, using comparative analysis. In this paper, the Danish labour market model is examined to identify any relevant policy measures which can be adopted in the Caribbean. Three Caribbean countries have been identified for the study: Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). The Danish labour market model is based on the concept of “flexicurity”, a combination of **flexibility** and **security**. The model, which is grounded in the historical and political culture of Denmark, allows the following features:

- i. a high degree of mobility of workers between jobs;
- ii. a low level of job security;
- iii. high rates of unemployment benefits and other social security payments;
- iv. well-established active labour market policies for those at the end of the labour market;
- v. a well-established education and training system which emphasizes lifelong learning and
- vi. a social partnership involving all stakeholders in the labour market.

[See, for example, Wilthagen and Tros, 2004; Viebrock and Clasen, 2007, 2009].

The “flexicurity system” is supported by sound macroeconomic policies, a targeted welfare policy system and well-functioning infrastructural facilities and public institutions. These elements have played a significant role in Denmark’s high ranking in various international socio-economic indices (human development index, index of economic freedom and world competitiveness index). Denmark has been able to record low rates of unemployment and high employment rates along with low rates of industrial unrest. The system has its benefits in terms of reducing labour costs to firms which are free to hire and fire at low adjustment costs and also in protecting workers who are laid off for short unemployment spells. There are however disadvantages with the system. These include the high costs of supporting the social security system, the lack of incentive to work among certain groups of workers despite established rights and duties and the disincentive by firms to invest in employee training because of a high turnover rate.

The “flexicurity system” contains a number of flexibility and security elements as shown in Table 1. These elements apply particularly to formal sector organisations and labour markets. In developing countries, where the informal sector can be large, these elements are not relevant. Furthermore, the high costs associated with these schemes put them out of the reach of several developing countries [see De Gobbi, 2007 and Jorgensen, 2009]. Some developing countries have however been able to introduce elements of the flexicurity system especially where there has been a tradition of social dialogue and cordial industrial relations.

TABLE 1
EXAMPLES OF FLEXICURITY ELEMENTS (AS TO THE WITLHAGEN MATRIX)

Security Flexibility	Job Security	Employment Security	Income Security	Combination Security
External numerical flexibility	Types of employment contracts; employment protection legislation; early retirement	Employment services/ALMP; training/lifelong learning	Unemployment compensation; minimum wages, other social benefits	Protection against dismissal during various leave schemes
Internal numerical flexibility	Shortened work weeks; part-time arrangements	Employment protection legislation; training/lifelong learning	Parttime supplementary benefits; study grants; sickness benefit	Different kinds of leave schemes; parttime pension
Functional flexibility	Job enrichment training; Labour leasing; subcontracting; outsourcing	Training/lifelong learning; job rotation; teamwork; multiskilling	Performance related pay schemes	Voluntary working time arrangements
Labour cost/wage flexibility	Local adjustments in labour costs; scaling/reductions in social security payments	Change in social security payments; employment subsidies; in-work benefits	Collective wage agreements; adjusted benefit for shortened workweek	Voluntary working time arrangements

Source: Adapted from Jorgensen, 2009.

This study examines the Caribbean labour market focusing on Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago with reference to the elements of the “flexicurity system” in order to determine the extent to which certain elements of the system can be adopted in these countries. The presentation of the study is as follows: in section 2, a macro-overview of the labour market in the three countries is presented, while in section 3, a more in-depth analysis is undertaken of the labour market regulations and flexicurity arrangements currently in place. In section 4, the social security and social protection systems in the three countries are analyzed with a special focus on the labour market implications. The range of active labour market policies, especially training policies is discussed in section 5, while in section 6, the experience with social dialogue and partnership is described. The final section summarizes the main conclusions of the study and the implications for labour market reform in the three countries.

2. A Macro-overview of the Caribbean Labour Market

The labour market in the Caribbean has seen significant changes over the past decades in response to both demographic and production changes. On the supply side, there has been a low rate of labour force growth and an ageing of the population, a gradual increase in the female participation rate with general constancy of the male participation rate and a general improvement in the educational attainment of those entering the labour force. On the demand side, there has been the growth in service-oriented employment with a decline in agricultural employment, the growth in the number of self-employed persons with an increase in small and micro-enterprises as well as in the informal sector and the general slow growth of formal sector employment. On the institutional aspects of the labour market, the Caribbean has witnessed a general decrease in the degree of unionization of the work force, although unions are still strong in key sectors of the economy (ports, public service, utilities). There have been very few changes in the legislation governing the operations of the labour market although there have been recent discussions on revising and introducing labour legislation (occupational health and safety, employment rights, etc). Agreements reached through the collective bargaining process tend to influence the operations of the labour market on an ongoing basis (that is non-mandatory benefits such as leave arrangements, allowances, acting arrangements, bonus payments, overtime payments, uniform allowances, etc).

Barbados has exhibited the slowest growth rate of the labour force and the highest rates of labour force participation over the 2000 to 2006 period [see Table 2]. Barbados also has the lowest population growth rates of the three countries under study. Over the period 2000 to 2006, the population growth rates of the countries were Barbados 0.36 %, Jamaica 0.53 % and Trinidad and Tobago 0.36 %. The low population and labour force growth rates for Barbados, along with an ageing of the population, can result in labour market shortages in the future as the economy expands. As shown in Table 2, there is a continual upward trend for the female labour force participation rate, with Barbados displaying the highest rate of the three countries. Male labour force participation rates are however higher than female rates and reflects the historical social relations with respect to the role of men and women in the labour market.

TABLE 2
LABOUR FORCE AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES IN BARBADOS, JAMAICA AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Country	Labour Force (000)						Labour Force Participation Rates (%)					
	2000			2006			2000			2006		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Barbados	71.9	66.5	138.4	73.4	70.1	143.5	74.8	62.7	68.4	73.4	62.8	67.8
Jamaica	615.0	490.3	1 105.3	695.6	557.5	1 253.1	73.0	54.3	65.3	73.5	56.3	64.7
Trinidad and Tobago	353.1	219.8	572.9	364.8	260.4	625.2	75.3	47.0	61.2	74.7	53.1	63.9

Sources: Barbados Economic and Social Report, 2006; Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2004, 2007; Labour Force Report, Trinidad and Tobago (2002 and website).

In general, there has been an increase in the educational attainment of those entering the labour force with universal primary level education (up to 12 years of age) in the three countries and high enrolment rates at the secondary level. In 2000, over half of the labour force in the three countries had attained secondary level education, with between 5 and 13 percent of the labour force being educated at the tertiary level. This improved educational attainment has resulted in a significant growth in the number of persons in professional, technical and managerial/administrative occupations where unemployment is almost zero.

The Caribbean has seen a shift from agricultural to services production over the past four decades. This shift has been accompanied by a movement away from agricultural employment toward services employment. The services sector in Barbados accounted for 78.6 percent of total employment in 2000, while in 2006, the result was 80.8 percent [see Table 3a]. In Jamaica, the services sector accounted for percent of total employment in 2000 and 64.8 percent in 2006 [see Table 3b]. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the services sector also employed about 65 percent of persons with jobs [see Table 3c]. The agricultural sector accounts for less than 5 percent of the employed labour force in these countries.

TABLE 3A
THE SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN BARBADOS, 2000 AND 2006

Sector	2000		2006	
	'000	%	'000	%
1 Sugar , Other Agriculture and Fishing	4.8	8.8	4.7	3.6
2 Construction and Quarrying	13.7	18.9	14.5	11.1
3 Manufacturing	10.1	8.8	5.5	4.2
4 Electricity, Gas and Water	1.9	1.5	2.3	1.7
5 Wholesale and Retail Trade	18.7	14.9	16.7	12.7

(continued)

TABLE 3A (concluded)

Sector	2000		2006	
	'000	%	'000	%
6 Tourism	14.1	11.2	13.5	10.3
7 Transportation and Communication	5.0	3.9	4.4	3.3
8 Financial Services	9.0	7.2	9.8	7.5
9 General Services	25.4	20.2	32.0	24.4
10 Government Services	24.5	19.5	27.1	20.7
Total	125.5	100.0	131.0	100.0

Source: Barbados Economic and Social Report.

TABLE 3B
THE SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN JAMAICA, 2000, 2006

Sector	2000		2006	
	'000	%	'000	%
1 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	195.6	21.0	201.7	17.9
2 Mining	4.6	0.5	6.0	0.5
3 Manufacturing	69.6	7.5	76.4	6.8
4 Construction and Installation	81.3	8.7	110.0	9.8
5 Transport, Storage and Communication	59.4	6.4	78.1	6.9
6 Financing, Insurance and Real Estate Bus. Serv.	53.1	5.7	62.5	9.6
7 Community, Social and Personal Services	254.8	27.3	308.9	27.5
8 Electricity, Gas and Water	6.3	0.7	6.7	0.6
9 Wholesale and Retail Trade, Hotels & Restaurant	206.3	22.1	271.6	24.2
10 Industry not specified	2.3	0.2	2.1	0.2
Total	931.1	100.0	1 123.7	100.0

Source: Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica.

TABLE 3C
THE SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 2000 AND 2006

Sector	2000		2006	
	'000	%	'000	%
1 Agriculture	36.4	7.2	25.7	4.4
2 Petroleum and Gas (incl Mining & Quarrying)	16.5	3.3	20.4	3.5
3 Manufacturing	55.0	10.9	55.5	9.5
4 Construction (incl Electricity and Water)	69.7	13.8	104.5	17.8
5 Transport, Storage and Communications	39.2	7.8	42.7	7.3
6 Other Services - of which	285.9	56.8	335.6	57.3
Wholesale and Retail	95.2	18.9	106.6	18.2
Community, Social and Personal	151.4	30.1	181.0	30.9
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	-	-	48.1	8.2
7 Not Classified	0.4	0.1	1.6	0.3
Total	503.3	100.0	586.2	100.0

Source: Central Statistical Office; website.

The employment rate (the number of employed persons as a percent of the population of working age) increased in two of the three countries over the period 2000 to 2006, suggesting a lowering of the unemployment rate and an increase in the demand for labour. Barbados recorded a marginal decrease in its employment rate, while Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago recorded an increase of over five percentage points [see Table 4].

TABLE 4
EMPLOYMENT RATE IN SELECTED CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, 2000 AND 2006

Country	2000		2006	
	No Employed (000)	Rate (%)	No. Employed (000)	Rate (%)
Barbados	129.0	62.2	130.9	61.9
Jamaica	933.5	51.7	1 123.7	59.2
Trinidad and Tobago	503.4	53.8	586.2	59.9

Source: Same as for Table 3.

Note: The adult population is used as a proxy for the working age population.

Informal sector employment is more significant in Jamaica than in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. Estimates for size of the informal sector vary from 10 percent of measured GDP for Barbados to 45 percent of GDP for Jamaica. Alternative estimates of the size of the informal sector have been calculated using the MIMIC model framework for the Caribbean during the early 2000s. These estimates are as follows: Barbados - 24.5 percent of GDP, Jamaica, 35 percent and Trinidad and Tobago was 24.4 percent [IMF, 2007]. The sector provides employment for largely low skill, self-employed workers especially in the agricultural, construction and services sectors. Labour market rigidities such as minimum wage constraints and mandated social security payment and benefits, have contributed to the significant size of the informal sector employment [IMF, 2007, p.48].

Unemployment rates have been on the decline over the past decade due to the growth of production in the three countries. In Barbados, the rate declined from 11.4 percent in 2000 to 9.8 percent in 2006, while in Jamaica, the rate fell from 15.6 percent in 2000 to 10.3 percent in 2006. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the rate dropped from 12.1 percent in 2000 to 6.2 percent in 2006. Unemployment rates are still higher for females than for males and young persons (15-24 years of age) are particularly affected by unemployment with their rate being twice the national average. Among the young, females are more affected by unemployment spells.

Wage rates in the region are largely set by the collective bargaining process or through labour legislation such as minimum wages. In some cases, the government has legislated wage increases for public sector workers. National minimum wages exist in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, while occupational minimum wages exist in Barbados.

The degree of unionization in the region has declined over the years from 30 to 40 percent in the 1960s to about 20 to 30 percent of the labour force in recent years. The labour unions are however still prominent in key sectors of the economy: public sector, ports, public utilities and some areas of the services sector (e.g., hotels, banks). The degree of industrial unrest has varied over the years, but in recent years, industrial action has not been as prominent as in the past. There has been a general tendency in the region to work towards the establishment of social partnerships involving the government, labour unions and employer associations. The impact of globalisation and other international events have led the social partners to work towards a common strategy and a set of agreed measures to reverse the adverse effects of these external shocks on the domestic economies.

Although the Caribbean countries have various forms of labour law and are involved in the specification of ILO conventions, very few changes have taken place in labour legislation over the years.

Though labour law reform has been discussed by labour unions and employer associations, such reform has not been forthcoming. Both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have established consultative/advisory bodies to review labour market legislation with little follow up on the recommendations.

Occupational health and safety at the workplace has been the main form of labour legislation enacted in the three countries within the past decade. Changes in labour market regulatory framework have emerged primarily through collective bargaining agreements. The provisions in these agreements have influenced the degree to which the labour market has become more flexible. The key informants believe that the labour market in the three countries has become a little more flexible, but further changes are needed to further increase the degree of flexibility.

The region is moving towards the creation of a CARICOM Certification of Skills Recognition. The CARICOM Skills National Status has been designed to facilitate the movement of skilled labour through the region. Provisions have been made for some persons to qualify for certification and status: graduates from recognized universities, artistes, musicians, sports persons, media workers and managers, and technical and supervisory staff attached to a company.

Over the past decade, some changes have been made to the operation of the labour market in the three countries. These changes have been partly induced by external factors, and partly by domestic circumstances. There is still a need to advance further changes in the labour market in order to promote greater flexibility while, at the same time, providing for workers' welfare (and rights) through social protection schemes and active labour market policies. The 'flexicurity' model adopted by Denmark offers a comparative experience for the countries of the region to follow. A brief comparison of Denmark with the three Caribbean countries would help to shed light on the nature of the task ahead.

In terms of the human development index (HDI), Denmark ranked fourteenth (14th) in 2005 compared with Barbados (31), Jamaica (101) and Trinidad and Tobago (59). Denmark's GDP per capita was almost twice that of Barbados in 2005 [see Table 5]. It has scored highly in terms of higher education and training and labour market efficiency. Indeed, Denmark had been among the top 5 countries in the world with respect to higher education and training and among the top 10 with respect to labour market efficiency. Denmark tops the world in the area of cooperation in labour employer relations, but scores poorly in the area of flexibility of wage determination. Although wage determination flexibility is considered as a competitive disadvantage for Denmark and the Caribbean, the Caribbean fares better in the context of international competitiveness [see Table 6]. The region has performed better than Denmark in terms of the rigidity of employment but has a competitive disadvantage in the other labour efficiency indicators such as hiring and firing practices and costs.

TABLE 5
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

Country	HDI Value 2005	GDP per Capita PPP US \$2005	HPI Value 2005	Population (mill) 2006
Denmark	0.949 (14)	33.973	8.2 (5)	5.4
Barbados	0.892 (31)	17.297	3.0 (1)	0.3
Jamaica	0.736 (101)	4.291	14.3 (34)	2.7
Trinidad & Tobago	0.814 (59)	14.603	7.3 (12)	1.3

Source: UNDP: Human Development Report 2007/2008. Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World. Notes: HDI is the Human Development Index. The values in brackets represent ranking for 2005. GDP is gross domestic product, while PPP is purchasing power parity in US dollars for 2005. HPI is the Human Poverty Index. Two indices are calculated HPI - 1 for a set of developing countries and HPI - 2 for OECD countries. The rankings in brackets refer to the position in a respective group. Denmark is in the OECD group, while the Caribbean countries are in the developing countries group.

TABLE 6
GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDICATORS 2007/8

Country	GCI Score 2006/7	Higher Education And Training Score	Labour Market Efficiency Score
Denmark	5.55 (3)	6.00 (2)	5.45 (6)
Barbados	4.48 (41)	5.08 (25)	4.54 (34)
Jamaica	4.06 (67)	3.89 (63)	4.38 (48)
Trinidad and Tobago	3.95 (76)	3.78 (71)	4.20 (64)

Source: World Economic Forum: *The Global Competitiveness Report, 2007/2008*.

Notes: GCI is the Global Competitiveness Index, with the ranking shown in brackets.

In terms of higher education and training, Barbados compares favorably with Denmark in the area of secondary enrolment, but drops back significantly in the area of tertiary enrolment [see Table 8]. The education and training indicators point to deficiencies in the region. Only Barbados has been able to compete in this area for some of the indicators.

The labour market aspects of the World Bank's *Doing Business* and the *Economic Freedom Index* indicate that Denmark has been doing much better than the Caribbean region. There is a high level of labour freedom and relative ease in employing workers in Denmark compared with the Caribbean countries [see Table 9]. Poor work ethic ranked highly as a factor adversely affecting business in the region [see Table 10].

TABLE 7
LABOUR MARKET EFFICIENCY RANKINGS FOR COMPETITIVENESS

Indicator	Denmark	Barbados	Jamaica	Trin/Tobago
Cooperation in labour-employer relations	1 (CA)	36 (CA)	115 (CDA)	123 (CDA)
Flexibility of wage determination	100 (CDA)	83 (CDA)	43 (CA)	84 (CDA)
Non-wage labour costs	9 (CA)	n.a.	43 (CA)	16 (CA)
Rigidity of Employment	15 (CDA)	n.a.	5 (CA)	7 (CA)
Hiring and Firing Practices	3 (CA)	65 (CDA)	59 (CDA)	61 (CDA)
Firing Costs	16 (CDA)	n.a.	89 (CDA)	92 (CDA)
Pay and Productivity	18 (CDA)	89 (CDA)	82 (CDA)	103 (CDA)
Reliance on Professional Mgt	9 (CA)	36 (CA)	43 (CA)	46 (CA)
Brain Drain	22 (CDA)	35 (CA)	101 (CDA)	81 (CDA)
Female participation in labour force	16 (CDA)	23 (CA)	63 (CDA)	100 (CDA)

Source: World Economic Forum: *The Global Competitiveness Report 2007/2008*.

Notes: CA indicates 'comparative advantage' and CDA denotes 'comparative disadvantage'.

TABLE 8
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING RANKINGS FOR COMPETITIVENESS

Indicator	Denmark	Barbados	Jamaica	Trin/Tobago
Secondary enrollment	2 (CA)	7 (CA)	58 (CDA)	60 (CDA)
Tertiary enrollment	10 (CA)	52 (CDA)	81 (CA)	97 (CDA)
Quality of the educational system	4 (CA)	20 (CA)	91 (CDA)	48 (CA)
Quality of Math and Science education	20 (CDA)	17 (CA)	105(CDA)	56 (CDA)
Quality of management of schools	9 (CA)	42 (CA)	59 (CDA)	43 (CA)
Internet access in schools	5 (CA)	44 (CA)	63 (CDA)	72 (CDA)
Local availability of research and training services	11 (CDA)	80 (CDA)	60 (CDA)	86 (CDA)
Extent of staff training	1 (CA)	42 (CA)	67 (CDA)	52 (CDA)

Source: World Economic Forum: *The Global Competitiveness Report, 2007/2008*.

Notes: Ranking is based on 131 countries. CA is competitive advantage and CDA is competitive disadvantage.

TABLE 9
LABOUR MARKET ASPECTS OF DOING BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM, 2008

Country	Ease of Doing Business Rank	Employing Workers Rank	Index of Economic Freedom ¹	Labour Freedom
Denmark	5	10	79.2 (11)	99.9
Barbados	n.a.	n.a.	71.3 (21)	80.0
Jamaica	63	33	66.2 (45)	73.2
Trinidad/Tobago	67	38	70.2 (29)	86.9

Source: World Bank (Doing Business) and Heritage Foundation (Economic Freedom).

Note: The number in brackets indicate ranking from 157 countries. The number of countries for the ease of doing business indicator is 178.

TABLE 10
THE MOST PROBLEMATIC LABOUR FACTORS FOR DOING BUSINESS
(% of responses and ranking among 14 items)

Reason	Denmark	Barbados	Jamaica	Trinidad/Tobago
1 Poor Work Ethic	2.1 (8)	17.5 (1)	8.7 (5)	13.1 (3)
2 Inadequately educated workforce	9.3 (4)	3.1 (11)	9.2 (4)	6.7 (7)
3 Restrictive labour regulations	9.2 (5)	7.1 (7)	2.0 (11)	2.3 (9)
Main reason	Tax rate (31.0)	Poor work ethic (17.5)	Crime and theft (23.9)	Crime and theft (22.9)

Source: Global Competitiveness Report 2007-8.

The comparative analysis with Denmark indicates that the Caribbean labour market has serious competitive disadvantages with respect to the role of the labour market in enhancing competitiveness. This result would suggest that significant reform would be needed to achieve the economic performance of Denmark. The Caribbean faces significant labour market challenges such as employment creation, linking wage increases to productivity growth and reducing the adjustment costs associated with the employment of persons [see Downes, 2006]. A detailed examination of the nature of labour market flexibility, social protection system and active labour market policies in the three countries would help to identify the specific reforms needed in the region.

3. Labour Market Flexibility

Labour market flexibility refers to “the ability of an enterprise (i) to adjust the level and timing of labour inputs to changes in demand, (ii) to vary the level of wages according to productivity and ability to pay and (iii) to deploy workers between tasks to meet changes in demand” [Ozaki, 1999, p. 2]. This definition has given rise to various forms of flexibility, namely, numerical, functional, temporal/working time, financial and locational. Numerical flexibility includes temporary and contract work, outsourcing and workplace re-engineering, while functional flexibility involves multi-tasking, job rotation, re-training and re-deployment. Temporal or working time flexibility includes annualized hours, flexitime, job sharing, part-time work, contract for service, overtime and staggered work. Financial flexibility relates to incentive bonuses, profit sharing, gain sharing and productivity/performance-based pay. Locational flexibility includes telework, homework and relocation. These forms of flexibility can give rise to external labour market flexibility which takes place among firms and internal labour market flexibility which occurs within firms.

Several reasons have been advanced for promoting labour market flexibility including the need to increase productivity, enhance efficiency, boost competitiveness, use new technological innovations, be cost-effective, adapt to changes in commodity and other markets and maintain a family-work life balance. Labour market flexibility is influenced by institutions (unions, government, labour laws, and collective bargaining practices), management practices, worker attitudes and public policies. Several elements of labour market flexibility have been in operation in the Caribbean over the years. For example, shift work, weekend work, part-time and temporary work have been standard features of the Caribbean labour market.

Newer forms of labour market flexibility have been selectively introduced in response to changing economic circumstances. Indicators of labour market flexibility suggest that Caribbean labour markets are not as inflexible as those in Latin America, but are less flexible than those in the Scandinavian countries. The Rama labour rigidity index which includes ILO Conventions ratified, annual leave with pay, maternity leave, social security contributions, minimum wage, severance pay and unionization, show relatively low rates of labour market rigidity [see Table 11]. The Marquez-Pages employment protection index which combines just cause for dismissal and tenure-related severance payment also suggests relatively low employment protection [see Table 11].

Barbados exhibited a lower degree of labour rigidity and employment protection than Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago during the late 1990s. In the World Bank's *Doing Business Index of Employment Rigidity*, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago score very lowly within the Caribbean, suggesting some degree of labour market flexibility with respect to the difficulty of hiring and firing and rigidity of hours. The costs of firing in terms of weeks of salary are however amongst the highest in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago [see Table 11]. The Heritage Foundation's indices of overall economic freedom and labour market freedom point to a relatively high degree of overall and labour market freedom in the Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago ranks above Barbados and Jamaica in terms of the degree of labour market freedom [see Table 12].

TABLE 11
LABOUR MARKET INDICES FOR SELECTED CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

Country	Rama's Labour Rigidity Index	Marquez-Pages Employment Protection	Doing Business Index of Employment Rigidity	Firing Costs (Weeks of Salary)
Antigua/Barbuda	0.390	-	10	52
Bahamas	0.580	2	17	26
Barbados	0.182	8	-	-
Belize	0.223	5	14	24
Dominica	-	-	17	58
Grenada	0.328	-	21	29
Guyana	0.415	-	21	56
Haiti	0.393	16	21	17
Jamaica	0.278	12	4	62
St Kitts/Nevis	0.476	4	17	13
St Lucia	0.306	-	7	56
St Vincent	0.251	-	13	54
Suriname	0.283	15	23	26
Trinidad/Tobago	0.354	17	7	67

Source: World Bank (2008), Rama (1995), Marquez-Pages (1998).

Note: The higher the value of the indices, the higher the degree of labour market rigidity.

TABLE 12
INDICES OF LABOUR AND OVERALL ECONOMIC FREEDOM IN THE CARIBBEAN, 2005, 2008

Country	Labour Freedom		Overall Economic Freedom	
	2005	2008	2005	2008
Bahamas	80.00	80.00	72.62	71.09
Barbados	80.00	80.00	70.13	71.33
Belize	82.18	80.90	64.36	62.81
Guyana	68.53	69.10	57.07	49.35
Haiti	61.59	62.40	48.34	48.95
Jamaica	73.75	73.30	67.57	66.16
Suriname	81.80	82.10	51.49	53.89
Trinidad/Tobago	86.82	86.90	72.32	70.24

Source: <http://www.heritage.org>. The higher the value, the higher the degree of economic freedom.

In a study of labour market flexibility in Barbados during the late 1990s, it was concluded that some degree of functional and temporal/work time flexibility existed within establishments [see Downes, 1999]. The survey also indicated that there was less scope for numerical flexibility due to the costs of hiring and firing, but financial flexibility was growing through the use of productivity and performance-based payment schemes for Barbadian enterprises. There has been moderate success with the implementation of such schemes especially in larger establishments [see Downes and Alleyne, 1998; Bannister, 2004].

Archibald et al (2005) employed the World Bank 'doing business approach' to assess the degree of labour market flexibility in Barbados. They found that "the most restrictive aspect of labour in Barbados is the rigidity of working hours, followed by the difficulty of firing, then the difficulty of hiring" (p. 13). Temporal or working time flexibility has been largely influenced by legislative provisions. Firing costs in the form of severance payments and unemployment insurance constrain the ability of enterprises to terminate workers. While union agreements tend to have a positive impact on operating costs and the ability to hire or fire workers, labour laws (which have hardly changed over the decades) have little or no impact on employment in establishments. Archibald et al (2005) concluded that the labour market in Barbados is more rigid than in Jamaica and in Trinidad and Tobago, which is contrary to the Rama (1995) and Marquez and Pages (1998) assessments. A survey of key informants indicates that greater efficiency and flexibility in the Barbadian labour market can be achieved through the use of unemployment insurance and severance payment funds to train and re-train workers, the institution of a '24-7' work time culture, the reduction of the number of sick leave days and public holidays and the implementation of social policies to protect workers from exploitation.

A recent survey of worker participation and workplace flexibility in Barbados [Nurse, 2006] found that over half of the survey respondents indicated that approximately 20 percent of their employees were casuals or temps; over time and part-time work was undertaken by 20 percent of the workforce and that weekend and contingent work was common. Flexitime, weekend work and shift work were more common among large establishments than smaller ones. Workers viewed flexitime positively and were willing to work under a system of performance-related pay.

In recent times, the Government of Barbados has proposed the introduction of a twenty-four work system to meet the increasing demands of a growing services sector. With the election of a new administration of government in January 2008, little progress has been made with this proposal.

Flexible work arrangements have been discussed in Jamaica since the late 1990s as part of the deliberations of the Labour Market Reform Committee which was established in 1995. A Green Paper was prepared incorporating the comments of the Social Partners. It has been recognized that some

degree of temporal/working time exists in Jamaica in the form of temping, shift and weekend work in several sectors. Since the publication of the Green Paper in 2000, little progress has been made with the formal implementation of flexible work arrangements although certain agreements between the labour unions and employers were made in 2003. These arrangements would involve flexitime, part-time work with benefits, telecommuting, job sharing, shift swaps and a compressed work week. In effect, the focus would be on temporal or work time flexibility. While the trade union movement prefers the implementation of various flexible work arrangements as part of collective bargaining agreement, the religious organisations have called for these arrangements to be implemented within a five-day week (Monday to Friday). The arrangements would also involve the change of certain labour laws such as the Minimum Wage Act and the Holiday with Pay Act. The issue of flexible work arrangements has recently arisen in the context of energy conservation in face of rising fuel prices and also in connection with the principles of decent working time.

The use of contract labour is a common feature amongst Jamaican enterprises. A study by the Jamaica Employers' Federation (2002) indicated that 83 percent of the responding enterprises engage contract labour. Persons employed in such establishments worked in jobs requiring little skill and constituted a small fraction of the workforce of enterprises. Employers used contract labour in order to increase productivity, improve flexibility and respond to uncertain business conditions. In response to increasing costs, falling market share and uncertainty, firms have resorted to outsourcing some activities or hiring persons on short term contracts. Such arrangements have given rise to a distinction between a 'contract of service' and a 'contract for service'. In the case of a 'contract of service', the person is regarded as an employee of the firm and is entitled to all the available benefits, while a 'contract for service' applies to independent contractors who are responsible for their own benefits not covered by the contract.

One of the statutes dealing with the termination of employment in Jamaica, the Labour Relations and Industrial Disputes Act (LRIDA) 1975 was amended to clarify the definition of a worker to refer to situations involving a 'contract for service'. This change would prevent employers from employing persons under the guise of 'contract for service' to avoid certain labour costs, when in fact the person was employed under a 'contract of service'.

As in other Caribbean countries, there has been little change in the labour laws over the past thirty years. To the extent that the provisions of these laws, especially the LRIDA and the Employment (Termination and Redundancy Payments) Act 1974, have elements which create labour market inflexibility, little has changed in recent years.

Agreements reached through the collective bargaining process are the main sources of labour market flexibility in recent years. Labour unions and employers have been able to negotiate agreements which include productivity bonuses, night work, shift work, over time work and paternity leave (work time flexibility). Such agreements have featured in the bauxite, sugar, tourism and utility sectors and in large companies.

Within the public sector, the Government of Jamaica has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the labour unions covering the periods 2004-2006, 2006-2008 and 2008-2010. These MOUs cover such elements as: wages/salaries restraint, no lay-offs and outsourcing of labour (i.e., little numerical flexibility), training, retraining and education of workers (especially nurses, teachers and managers), the use of cost saving to enhance worker welfare and the use of consultation, social dialogue and voluntarism in labour relations.

Key informants indicate that in assessing labour market flexibility on a scale of 1 (totally inflexible) to 10 (fully flexible), Jamaica scores about 6. Most of the flexibility has been in work time flexibility and, to some extent, functional flexibility. Numerical flexibility has not occurred due to the provisions of labour laws governing the severance of workers. Some attempts at financial flexibility have been made in large companies in the form of profit sharing and employee share ownership programs (ESOPs). The labour unions have been open to discussing various forms of labour market flexibility and have negotiated some elements of flexibility with employers.

In Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), there has been little change in labour laws since the introduction of the Industrial Relations Act (1972). Trinidad and Tobago is the most regulated of the three countries examined in this study since it has an Industrial Court to deal with labour disputes. The main pieces of legislation enacted over the past decade have been the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2004 and the Maternity Protection Act 1998. Like Jamaica, T&T has national minimum wage legislation along with selected occupational minimum wages.

The existence of the Retrenchment and Severance Benefit Act and the activism of the labour unions generally make it easier to hire than to fire workers. Hiring involves both wage and non-wage costs, while firing involves specification of reasons for dismissal, advance notice and severance payments for those who qualify.

Numerical flexibility is more evident in the non-union sectors where contract labour is a common feature. Within the unionized sectors, provisions on 'contract labour' in collective bargaining agreements limit the ability of employers to increase employment at will. Casual and temporary workers are used by employers to keep labour costs at a competitive level.

Working time flexibility is generally covered in collective agreements, while functional flexibility is more likely in small non-unionized enterprises. Financial flexibility in the form of productivity bonus and performance-related pay are not widely practiced in enterprises in T&T. Larger companies have some form of profit-sharing and limited ESOPs.

Locational flexibility is permitted under collective bargaining agreements which allow the transfer of employees provided there is no serious dislocation and disruption of family life. In some cases persons are paid for effecting such re-location.

The labour unions are not generally opposed to aspects of labour market flexibility provided that it does not lower decent work standards, there is information sharing and proper implementation and the benefits are justly shared. Both labour unions and the employers' associations point to the implementation deficit regarding labour legislation in T&T and the lack of a well developed labour market information system.

In many respects labour market flexibility has developed in certain sectors to reflect their operational needs. For example, numerical flexibility exists in the construction and hotel sectors which provide seasonal work, while contract and part-time work can be found at the Port. The recent passing of the Occupational and Safety and Health Act (2004) can limit the degree of functional flexibility and increase the costs of operations.

Within the Caribbean, attempts are being made to establish a Single Market and Economy which would involve the free mobility of selected categories of labour. Such labour mobility creates greater flexibility in the domestic labour market as workers move from one country to another on contract and in several instances, at lower rates of remuneration. Mobility has been significant in such sectors as agriculture, construction and general services. Some key informants have argued that the harmonization of labour laws and the institution of a regional minimum wage would prevent the exploitation of workers and facilitate the movement of persons.

An assessment of labour market flexibility in the Caribbean indicates that some degree of flexibility exists. Working time or temporal and functional flexibility are the main forms of labour market flexibility. There are selected forms of financial flexibility especially in large unionized firms (especially profit-sharing and performance-based pay). Numerical flexibility is more restricted by labour legislation although there is a growing trend towards the use of contract labour (both domestic and migrant labour). The growing number of self-employed persons suggests that certain aspects of flexibility (working time, functional and locational) will grow over time. Both Barbados and Jamaica have established productivity institutions to promote the greater use of productivity/performance-based incentive pay. T&T is currently seeking to establish a productivity institution. Flexibility is more prominent in the non-unionized sectors and in production areas subject to seasonal fluctuations. Some

measure of flexibility has been introduced via collective bargaining agreements as labour laws have not changed in any fundamental way over the past decade. The Social Partners (Government, labour unions and employers) have been engaged in dialogue to enhance the overall flexibility in the labour market of the Caribbean.

4. Social Protection

An important element of the 'flexicurity model' is the establishment of a social welfare system to provide income support or security for those who are affected by labour market flexibility measures. Unemployment is one feature of numerical labour market flexibility. Workers may be laid off, made redundant or severed and therefore may become unemployed on a temporary or permanent basis: social protection therefore refers to the range of measures which improve or protect human capital from the risks and vulnerabilities associated with adverse labour market adjustments. These measures include severance payment, unemployment insurance, retirement benefits and pensions, health insurance, targeted income support and social welfare programs. The minimization of the social costs associated with labour market flexibility is achieved by the design of an effective and efficient social protection system largely provided by the state. Private institutions, including non-governmental agencies, also supplement state provided social protection programs.

In the Caribbean countries covered in this study-Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) - some form of legislation exists to cover workers who are severed or made redundant through labour market flexibility measures. These legislative provisions include:

1. Barbados: Severance Payment Act of 1973 and subsequent amendments.
2. Jamaica: The Employment (Termination and Redundancy Payments) Act 1974 and subsequent amendments
3. Trinidad and Tobago: Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act of 1985.

These legislative measures provide income protection or compensation for workers who are terminated by a company because of redundancy, natural disaster or after a period of lay-off or short time [see Table 13]. Once a worker satisfies a time attachment to the firm, he/she is entitled to a sum of money equivalent to a number of weeks' wages/salary [see Table 13]. In all cases, the worker must be given advance notice of the termination of the employment relationship/contract. Certain categories of workers such as casual, seasonal, probationary, fixed term, short term workers and independent contractors are excluded from these provisions. The trend towards employing such workers reinforces the intent to circumvent the payment of severance by the employer and minimize the adjustment costs associated with the employment relationship.

TABLE 13
REDUNDANCY PAYMENTS PER YEAR OF CONTINUOUS EMPLOYMENT

	Barbados	Guyana	Jamaica	Trinidad & Tobago	CARICOM
Qualifying Period	2 years	1 year	2 years	1 year	1 year
Less than 5 years	2.5 weeks	1 week	2 weeks per year for the first 10 years	2 weeks for periods under 5 years	2 weeks for up to 10 years
5 to 10 years	2.5 weeks	2 weeks for periods greater than 5 but less than 10 years	ibid	3 weeks for periods of employment in excess of 5 years	ibid
10 to 20 years	3 weeks	3 weeks for periods in excess of 10 years up to a maximum of 52 weeks	3 weeks for periods of continuous employment in excess of 10 years	ibid	3 weeks for periods in excess of 10 years
Over 20 years	3.5 weeks for periods of continuous service beyond 20 years but not exceeding 33 years		ibid	ibid	ibid

Source: Cowell (2005).

Barbados is the only Caribbean country with an unemployment insurance scheme (UIS) which was introduced in 1981. Both the employee and employer contribute to the UIS and the worker can receive a payment when he/she becomes unemployed. There are qualifying conditions and time limits associated with the receipt of the UI payment. The existence of the UIS alongside the severance payment scheme allows qualified unemployed workers to engage in 'double dipping', that is, drawing on the two incomes from the government when unemployment occurs. A reverse tax credit arrangement exists in Barbados for low income workers.

All three countries have provisions for the granting of retirement benefits and pensions. Non-contributory old age pensions are granted to persons once they reach the qualifying age, while contributory pensions are paid according to the terms of the arrangements. In light of the ageing population in the region, Caribbean governments have engaged in some form of pension reform by largely extending the qualifying age for the granting of a pension and also increasing the contributions to national pension schemes. In several instances, private pension schemes supplement national or state-run schemes.

Provisions for health care are made through public hospitals and health centres and national insurance schemes. In Barbados, workers can receive medical attention, free of charge, from the state's hospitals and polyclinics or obtain reimbursement of expenses for medical attention through private

insurance schemes. In Jamaica, workers' medical benefits are free or delivered at a nominal cost at public clinics. A National Health Fund gives universal complementary coverage for prescription drugs associated with some chronic diseases. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, workers' medical benefits are related to means-tested social assistance in public health clinics. Sickness and maternity medical care is provided for workers in all three countries.

A National Insurance Scheme (NIS) exists in the three countries and makes provision for a range of social benefits for those who qualify: old age disability, workplace injury, sickness and maternity benefits, pensions [see Osborne, 2004]. Family allowances to assist with difficult family circumstances are available in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago as part of their social assistance programs. Social security arrangements for the unemployed in the three countries provide for loss of income due to sickness, injury on the job and maternity and invalidity cases.

In summary, when a worker becomes involuntary unemployed and is paid his/her severance payment, then there is no income support available except for the unemployment insurance payment in Barbados. Some unemployed workers who reside in households with relatives living abroad rely on remittances to tie them over the unemployment spell. Empirical evidence for Caribbean countries indicates that the receipt of remittances from abroad tends to reduce the probability of participating in the labour market [World Bank, 2005]. Unemployed workers displaced from the formal sector also engage in sporadic work opportunities in the informal sector. These tend to be in elementary occupations with little or no social security benefits. Studies on the informal sector in the region indicate that it accounted for 10 to 15 percent of measured GDP in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago and over 45 percent of GDP in Jamaica during the late 1990s [see Downes, 2006, p.12].

Since unemployed workers form part of the poor within a country, social policies that are targeted at the poor also benefit the unemployed worker. Several social programs have been instituted by the governments to meet the poverty challenge. In Barbados, a number of facilities are available to provide assistance to the poor and unemployed. The Poverty Alleviation Bureau provides assistance to persons with house repairs and construction, training, public utilities and other household needs. A National Assistance Program provides a safety net to these persons in the form of assistance-in-kind and monetary grants. A welfare-to-work program has also been instituted to wean persons off welfare through skills training and motivational programs. Urban and Rural Development Commissions assist with infrastructural development and small (micro) enterprise development. Barbados has also introduced a reverse tax credit for workers who receive income below a threshold level. This credit is given to workers on submission of their annual income tax returns.

Jamaica has an active social assistance program funded over the years by international funding agencies (World Bank, IADB). An important social protection facility is the Program for Advancement of Health and Education (PATH) which is a conditional cash transfer program. PATH replaced the Food Stamp Program and a cash transfer program for the elderly and disabled poor. The Poor Relief Program is also a transfer program which has been incorporated into the PATH.

PATH transfers income (cash grant) to vulnerable persons (children, elderly, disabled, mothers) and also seeks to improve the health and education of the poor. It has been designed to reduce child labour by requiring children in beneficiary households to attend school regularly and obtain medical check-ups.

Plans are under way to strengthen the PATH by establishing a welfare-to-work program and reforming the pension system. A special program for unemployed youth - Earn and Learn Program - is being developed. Consideration is also being given to the implementation of an unemployment insurance scheme.

In Trinidad and Tobago, unemployed workers can obtain school-term employment relief while enhancing their skills through the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP). The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEDEP) also provides short-term employment for semi-skilled and unskilled persons and helps with fostering entrepreneurship amongst displaced workers. Unemployed workers can enhance their human capital through a range of training programs. There is also a limited conditional cash transfer program in place.

In conclusion, the social protection system in the Caribbean for the displaced worker is not fully developed. While severance payment schemes are in place for those who qualify, a large percent of the workforce in elementary occupations do not have income support during unemployment spells. Barbados has an unemployment insurance scheme, but only those who satisfy certain conditions can benefit from the scheme. The unemployed workers have to rely on special social assistance programs during unemployment spells. The informal sector and remittances from abroad also help to cushion the income loss associated with unemployment. Jamaica is now planning to introduce a formal unemployment assistance system.

5. Active Labour Market Policies

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) constitute the third element of the flexicurity model. ALMPs are government measures designed to improve the employability of persons in the labour market. These measures apply to both the employed and unemployed who are seeking employment or desirous of enhancing their human capital through education and training.

There are three main types of ALMPs, namely:

1. **Public employment services**-which provide labour market information to job seekers and facilitate entry into the labour market;
2. **Training schemes**-apprenticeship, institutional training in technical and vocational areas. By enhancing the human capital of workers, their employability is increased.
3. **Employment subsidies**-tax benefits which encourage firms to employ more workers.

ALMPs complement social protection measures and seek to move the individual from welfare to work. Given the dynamic nature of the labour market, it is important that workers engage in lifelong learning so that they can keep abreast of the changing skill and knowledge needs of the labour market. For example, in the new information age, computer and ICT literacy has been added to numeracy and basic literacy in the knowledge of workers.

Caribbean countries have engaged in various forms of ALMPs over the years, especially training schemes and public employment services. Training schemes and, to a lesser extent, public employment services and employment subsidies have been used in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The private sector (including non-governmental and community-based organisations) has also been involved in the provision of employment services and training schemes for a fee.

In Barbados, a National Employment Bureau has been established by the government to provide information to job seekers. One condition for the receipt of an unemployment insurance payment is that the unemployed person must be actively seeking a job. The National Employment Bureau provides this facility by providing the information on job vacancies. Unemployed workers must register with the bureau and report to it on a regular basis. The Bureau also assists with the placement of persons who are seeking jobs in overseas migrant worker programs in the USA and Canada. The services of the Bureau are free of charge and cater primarily to middle and lower category skills. Private agencies tend to focus on higher category skills since these persons can afford to pay the fees associated with job search. As part of the labour market information system (LMIS), public employment bureaus play an important role in information sharing and job matching. Some career counseling and job application services are provided by the Bureau. Data for 2007 indicate that 49 percent of the local job placements made by the Bureau were in elementary occupations, with only 4.2 percent of the placements being technicians and associated professionals. No placements were made in the senior official and management occupational groups.

The enhancement of the human capital of the country takes place through on-the-job training and institutional training. Ashton et al (2001) and BEC (2002) indicate that companies in Barbados engage in a high degree of on-the-job training, especially for clerical, technical and vocational workers.

Industrial training is conducted by several governmental agencies such as the Barbados Vocational Training Board (BVTB), the Technical and Vocational Educational and Training Council (TVET Council), the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP), the Barbados Community College (BCC) and several evening schools. This training is supplemented by that provided by private and quasi-public institutions such as the Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity (BIMAP), the School of Continuing Studies of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Pinelands Creative Workshop (PCW) and several other community groups, trade unions and private entities.

The facilities provide for lifelong learning and skills development. The BVTB is the main training agency in the area of vocational programs for persons who need to acquire entry-level skills in order to enter the labour market. In addition, the BVTB offers programs for the upgrading of skills, the retraining of workers for new occupations, apprenticeships, skills training and retraining for retrenched workers. The range of technical and vocational programs not only provides technical skills but also soft skills which are needed for effective functioning in the labour market.

The TVET Council is a tripartite body consisting of government, employer and worker representatives. It is responsible for coordinating technical and vocational training in Barbados. It also manages an Employment and Training Fund which is used by employers to train and upgrade the skills of their employees. The Council has introduced the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) which shifts the qualification system from 'education' and 'experience' to 'competence' and 'practical work'. Displaced workers can take advantage of this training arrangement to upgrade their skills over time.

The Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic is the main provider of certified technical and vocational education in Barbados. It accounts for approximately 27 percent of the total enrolment in tertiary level institutions in Barbados with male students being dominant in automotive, electrical/electronic and mechanical engineering, building trades and agriculture and female students recording high enrolment rates in commercial and human ecology programs. While the majority of students are young persons the SJPP offers on-line and short-term courses to upgrade the skills of the workforce.

The Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity provides short and long-term training in various areas of business management - short term courses to graduate degrees. The management programs cover such areas as supervisory/administrative management, accounting and finance, human

resource management, marketing and especially information technology. The available data indicate that participants are attached to the services sector. There has also been a noticeable shift from company-sponsored training to individual-funded training as workers (especially females) focus on career development and skills development.

Training in Jamaica has been designed to provide workers with the requisite skills and competencies to perform at international levels. There is a range of private and public sector agencies providing skills training to both the employed and unemployed. The Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust/National Training Agency (NTA) is the main agency providing technical and vocational training in Jamaica. HEART/NTA oversees a network of training centres offering a range of courses and programs: agriculture, automotive services, construction, business/commercial subjects, information technology, cosmetology, arts and craft, maritime services and hospitality [see McArdle, 2005]. HEART/NTA is funded by a levy on payrolls above the threshold of Ja \$14,444 per month in 2005. Firms that accept trainees for on-the-job training receive a tax exemption. The training provided by HEART/NTA allows workers to increase their competencies over time through a testing procedure. There are five levels of training competency:

- **Level 1:** Directly Supervised Worker (waiter, gardener, sewing machine operator, housekeeper)
- **Level 2:** Supervised Skilled Worker (receptionist, bartender, tiler, sales assistant)
- **Level 3:** Skilled Independent or Autonomous Worker (bank teller, baker, mason, plumber, accounting clerk)
- **Level 4:** Specialised Worker or Supervisory Worker (builder, web designer, automotive technician)
- **Level 5:** Managerial or Professional: (teacher, systems analyst, engineer, accountant).

In 2007, Level 3 training was targeted by HEART/NTA for expansion. Enterprise-based training is also provided. In keeping with the needs of the new economy, HEART/NTA requires all of its graduates to be IT literate. Unemployed workers can therefore receive new skills in order to increase their chances of finding employment.

As indicated earlier, the PATH program has been targeted to provide unemployed household members with skills training. This forms part of the government's welfare-to-work program.

The Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLLL) was established in 2006 as a transformation of the Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) "to bridge the gap between the school system and the facilities that are available to make persons into more productive members of society" [PIOJ: *Labour Market Information Newsletter*, no 53, January 2007, p. 9]. The core program of JFLLL is the High School Equivalency Programme (HISEP) which has been designed to "reduce the gap between educational attainment and basic employment requirements" [ibid]. The participant will be persons who did not complete secondary level education. There are also several agencies which provide training for unemployed persons at the community level in collaboration with HEART/NTA.

The Ministry of Labour in Jamaica has a labour market information system to provide workers with job information and counseling/placement services.

Trinidad and Tobago has a range of active labour market arrangements with a special focus on skills and training. The government has a National Employment Service (NES) with seven exchanges located across the country. Like other public employment services in the Caribbean, the NES is highly underutilized as there are no requirements to register at the NES. Job information tends to flow through informal channels such as word-of-mouth and social networks. There are plans to convert the NES to One Stop Career Resource Centres (OSCRCs) which would provide information on job vacancies and skill availabilities, job counseling, career planning and job placement.

There is a wide range of training programs targeted at the young cohorts and unemployed workers in the labour force. The Unemployment Relief Program (URP), established in 1967, provides

unemployed persons with short-term employment relief while promoting individual skill development. The Community-based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program (CEPEP) also offers employment for semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The program was established in 2002 in order to enhance, protect and clean the physical environment in various communities. It also seeks to foster community-based entrepreneurship while contributing to environmental sustainability.

The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Program (YTEPP) is a long-standing skills training program established in 1988. It provides for the skills development of unemployed workers so that they can either re-enter the labour market or seek self-employment. The program not only provides for technical skills but also entrepreneurship and life skills. There are three programs: Career Enhancement training, Vocational Skills training and entrepreneurship development and support. The Multi-sector Skills Training Program (MuST) is a public-private sector partnership program designed to train unemployed workers, aged 18 to 50 years, who have been economically disadvantaged, re-entering the labour market or differently able. The main sectors covered have been construction, hospitality and tourism. The program is administered by the National Training Agency (NTA) and provides work-based training and literacy and numeracy workshops. It allows workers to work toward the National Vocational Qualification certification. The On-the-Job Training Program, which was started in 1993, provides younger workers (16 to 30 years) with work experience, skills acquisition, life skills and behavioural training. Trainees are placed in jobs on completion of their training. The government recently established a Retraining Program for displaced workers. This program provides for lifelong learning and new skills acquisition for displaced or retrenched workers aged 30 to 45 years.

There are other training programs targeted at the youth: the Youth Development Apprenticeship Centres program designed to provide young ,high risk youth (15 to 25 years of age) with computer, agriculture, and personal skills and exposure to sports and cultural activities; the Military-led Youth Apprenticeship Re-orientation Training program (MYPART) also provides high risk youth with technical and vocational skills in a disciplined environment and also opportunities for certification and meaningful employment; the Youth Apprenticeship Program in Agriculture program provides youth with agricultural skills on both private and public farms and the Helping You Prepare for Employment (HYPE) program which focuses on youth who had dropped out of school before graduation and cannot find employment. The HYPE provides youth with high level skills such as plumbing, electrical and other construction-based areas. There are plans to merge the HYPE program with the National Skills Program to create a master craftsman program.

The National Training Agency (NTA) was established in 1999 as a private state-owned agency to coordinate and regulate TVET in Trinidad and Tobago. The NTA has supervised a range of training programs and provides information on labour market needs. The agency works with other training bodies to certify occupational training standards using the National Vocational Qualifications framework. The NTA, along with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT), is expected to facilitate, coordinate and accredit all the training programs which allow Trinidad and Tobago to achieve its goal of developed country status by the year 2020. The Vision 2020 Strategic Plan emphasizes the role of human resources development (education and training) in enhancing productivity and competitiveness. The focus of the Plan is to increase and expand tertiary level education and training to provide a skilled workforce for key strategic areas, namely, manufacturing, agriculture, energy and tourism. The government has provided financial assistance to increase the numbers of persons with TVET (that is, the Government Assistance for Tertiary Education (GATE) program whereby the government pays the tuition fees of students attending tertiary institutions) and also an evaluation and certification program called Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

The government introduced a national minimum wage in 1998 to provide a safety net for vulnerable service sector workers such as domestics and store clerks. A special minimum wage was introduced for security guards.

6. Social Dialogue

The Caribbean countries are members of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and therefore subscribe to the principles of tripartism and social dialogue. Several ILO conventions are observed by the three countries. Over the past decade, governments and labour unions and employer associations have sought to strengthen the process of social dialogue by formalizing several agreements.

Arising out of the economic crisis in the early 1990s, Barbados has established a Social Partnership which has become a model for the region and other countries. The Social Partners first signed a Protocol for the implementation of a prices and incomes policy in 1993 to manage the economic difficulties facing the country. The centerpiece of this Protocol was a freeze in wages and prices for almost two years. Further Protocols have been signed by the Social Partners and include a number of matters beyond wages and prices: human resources development, productivity, poverty eradication, public sector reform, *inter alia* [see Goolsarran, 2005]. It has been suggested that these Protocols have resulted in improved labour-management relations, lower inflation, reduced fiscal deficit and better economic management [see Greaves, 2004; Downes and Nurse, 2004]. The establishment of the National Productivity Council was a significant result of the social dialogue. The Council was established in 1993 to develop productivity schemes which can boost organisational performance and provide a basis for increased pay. The Council is now well established and provides advice to other countries in the region.

The other Caribbean countries have not been as successful as Barbados in the formalization of the social dialogue process. Jamaica was able to develop a draft national social compact in 1996, but it did not achieve much success. The country has been more successful in the preparation of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) at the sector level: public sector, banana, bauxite and water. These MOUs have been largely bi-partite (labour unions and either government or employers). These MOUs have played a role in changing the industrial relations climate from being highly adversarial to being more cooperative. The MOUs for the public sector have been aimed at assisting with the severe economic problems facing the country. They generally call for wage, employment and expenditure restraint in order to keep the public debt, inflation and the fiscal deficit under control while facilitating economic growth. The Social Partners have also collaborated to establish a Productivity Centre to promote productivity growth in Jamaica.

In Trinidad and Tobago, a compact was signed by the Social Partners in 2000 to further the process of social dialogue. Although several attempts have been made to activate the process, progress has been slow. Some discussions took place in the context of the development of the country's Strategic Plan, Vision 2020, and also with the establishment of a Productivity organisation. Little concrete action has taken place with respect to these matters.

While social dialogue has been a commitment of the stakeholders in the labour market, with the exception of Barbados and, to a lesser extent, Jamaica, little concrete action has taken place in the region. Social dialogue is expected to provide the basis for identifying the reforms needed to make the labour market more flexible without sacrificing the welfare and rights of workers.

7. Conclusion

The assessment of the labour market in the three Caribbean countries, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, indicates that some degree of labour market reform is needed to cope with the challenges facing the countries. Labour market legislation has been slow to change, with very few significant changes taking place over the past decade. While employers have called for greater labour market flexibility, labour unions have not been ready for significant changes which can adversely affect the welfare of workers. Labour flexibility issues have been selectively addressed during collective bargaining and some measure of progress has been made especially in the area of working time or temporal flexibility.

The social protection system for displaced workers in the region is weak, so that labour unions have been reluctant to concede on some aspects of labour flexibility. It is generally agreed by all stakeholders that active labour market policies, especially the provision of training and labour market information, are critical areas. Training and information flows can contribute to labour market flexibility. The tentative steps at formalizing the social dialogue process in the region has been one of the factors responsible for the slow progress with achieving greater labour market flexibility.

While the Danish 'flexicurity' model has certain attractive features, the institutional and behavioral features of the labour market in the Caribbean restrict its applicability. A comparison of the labour market indicators for Denmark and the Caribbean indicates a significant distance in economic performance. The catch-up process for the region would be a major undertaking. The process of change would require recognition of the task ahead - both its volume and urgency.

The region would need to get the social dialogue process fully activated so that the reforms needed can be identified and implemented. The Caribbean region shows several areas of competitive disadvantage with respect to labour market indicators. These areas can become the main focal areas of change in the process of achieving greater flexibility while protecting the welfare of workers. The public costs associated with social protection and active labour market policies can be a (contingent) fiscal burden on the small developing countries of the Caribbean. In addition any growth in the informal labour market can restrict the applicability of the flexicurity system. The system also need the full cooperation of the Government, labour unions and employers and this cooperation is not always forthcoming in the region. While some elements of the flexicurity system can be adopted in the Caribbean, it is clear that a wholesale implementation of the system is not possible. In designing its own system for dealing with labour market issue, Caribbean policy makers can however draw on the Danish experience with the flexicurity system.

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