

Interview. Nakawa Vocational Training Institute is one of the four public vocational training institutes directly operated and administered by the Ministry of Education and Sports through the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training department. As the institute marks 46 years of existence, Mr Fred Mayanja, the deputy principal in charge of training, talked to *Daily Monitor's Isaac Ssejjombwe*.

Give us a brief background about Nakawa Vocational Training Institute?

Nakawa Vocational Training Institute is a public institution. The institute is supervised by the Ministry of Education under the department of Uganda business technical education and vocational training, which is responsible for all vocational institutions in Uganda.

It was established in 1971, making 46 years of existence. We are a skilled provider and I'm proud to say, we are the best skills provider.

What are some of the courses taught at the institute?

We teach electronics, electricity, machine and fitting, motor vehicle mechanic and maintenance, wood working technology, plumbing and pipe fitting, welding and fabrication, building and concrete practice, and auto electrical course, a one-year course, which equips students with skills of handling auto parts of a car.

All these are certificate courses and take two years, apart from auto electrical, which takes one year.

After the two years, one is assessed by two bodies; Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) and Uganda Business Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB).

Why don't you award diplomas for the nine courses?

Actually, plans are ongoing for Nakawa Vocational Institute to start awarding diplomas. It has been a long process.

We didn't want to affiliate with any institute. There were actually proposals to affiliate with Kyambogo University but we wanted to issue our own diplomas so that if a student gets a certificate, it is easier for him or her to also upgrade to a diploma.

National Council for Higher Education, which is responsible for higher schools has already accredited us, so come next year in September, we shall start awarding diplomas for two courses; vocational diploma in electrical engineering and vocational diploma in mechanical engineering.

What else do you teach apart from these courses?

We also train instructors from other institutions.

This was after a survey that was conducted recently and proved that most of the instructors from other institutions are not upskilled.

Their level of skills is very low and that is why we decided to come up with a scheme called retooling. The Education ministry requested us to start conducting diploma classes for them.

Nakawa Vocational Institute to start diploma programmes



Nakawa Vocational Training Institute has got enough facilities, which enables it to equip students with vocational and practical skills.
PHOTO BY GODFREY LUGAJU

How relevant is vocational education towards social and economic transformation of Uganda?

The importance cannot be measured. It is great. Truth is Uganda is more less shifting from agro-based economy to more of an industrial based economy.

There are many industries coming up and they are not employing people who are not trained and its people from technical and vocational institutes who can offer them services. Our input as vocational institutes towards the growth of the economy is really much desired.

How has the institute contributed to vocational education in Uganda?

We are still the leading vocational training institute in Uganda. Apart from training students, we are training instructors from other institutes. Some come during holidays while others come regularly during our normal programme.

This is already a contribution because we are sharpening instructors who go back and re-equip learners who are employees of industries.

We always receive people from different companies who want to have our students for industrial training then after retain them after three months.

What programmes do you offer as an institute?

We have three programmes. Basic full time programme, which runs from morning up to 4pm.

We also have evening or part-time programme that was designed for working people. It runs from 4pm till 7pm.

The last one is short courses, which are one week, two, three or even a month depending on what a student wants. These are basically industrial workers.

What is the entry requirement to this institute?

For all certificate courses, minimum is O-Level but if someone came with A-Level, that would be an added advantage with good pass marks in Physics, Mathematics and English.

Currently, the government is putting emphasis on skills development. What is your take about it?

Actually, the government has taken on a strategy that is referred to as Skilling Uganda. They want youth to be skilled in different fields in order to fight unemployment.

We are trying to have a shift from job seekers to job creators and even be able to employ others.

How many students do you pass out at the end of every academic year?

Right now, we have 900 students and when you add the instructors, it totals to 1,200. On average, every year, we pass out about 500 students at certificate level.

What are the strengths of Nakawa Vocational Training Institute compared to other institutions in Uganda?

Our strength is having equipment and machines we expose to our students while conducting skills training, which have been both provided by the government of Uganda and Japan. Our instructors are well exposed and trained. At least 99 of instructing staff have been trained in Japan in different relevant skills upgrade.

Lastly, our location is very strategic. We are within an industrial



One of the well equipped workshops at Nakawa Vocational Training Institute. PHOTO BY GODFREY LUGAJU

ESTABLISHED

Nakawa Vocational Training Institute was established in 1971 by the government in cooperation with the government of Japan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The primary objective of the establishment was to provide vocational training skills to school leavers and apprentices in enterprises and to upgrade and assess competencies of industrial workers. Apart from training students, the institute also trains instructors from other institutes.