



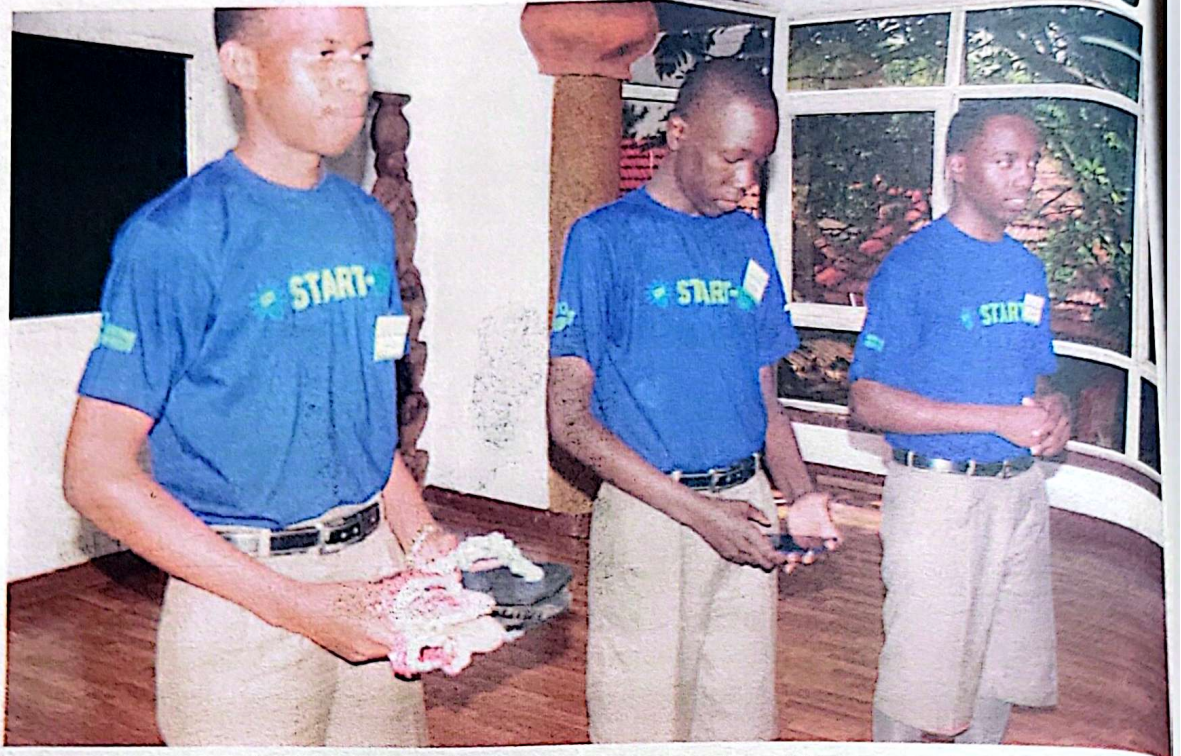
HANDS-ON EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES FOR JOB CREATION

New era: Schools stress skills training

Gone are the days when people would wait to acquire business and vocational skills in institutions of higher learning. Today, it is increasingly becoming common for schools to equip their students with such skills while in secondary school to prepare them.

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Business experts say, a number of small scale businesses in Uganda do not live to celebrate their first anniversary and this has been attributed to a number of factors. However, lack of entrepreneurial skills is top on the list. In order to reduce on this, a number of initiatives have been started in schools to help equip secondary school students with entrepreneurial skills especially on critical thinking before one starts a business, business planning, and management, among others. One such programme is PASCH (partner schools for the future) together with the Geothe Institute's Start Up competition.



Students showcase their marketing skills while selling sandals they had made during Geothe Institute's Start Up competitions to assess students' ability in business skills. PHOTO BY STEPHEN OTAGE

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THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE START UP COMPETITION

One such student is Zulaika Namwanje, a Senior Four student at Mengo Senior School, who recently participated in the business startup competition. She shares that, "Students had come up with different projects. I was interested because I felt that it

was important to have business skills currently and in future, but also, the competition came after a weeklong training on how to develop a business plan," she says.

During the training, 24 participating students were trained on business skills of communication, marketing, confidence and coming up with a business plan and to put these further into practice, they were put in groups of three and given six weeks to come up with a business plan for their start-up project.

"As a team, we looked at Uganda's economy as it stands now and concluded that it is largely based on agriculture. We also noted that farmers

who grow bananas on a small scale lack the market. We, therefore, came up with a project that would seek to provide market for small scale banana farmers which can help improve their standards of living by getting our raw materials - bananas from them," Namwanje explains.

Her colleague Darlson Ruth Bawooza and Betty Flavia Nankya with whom they won the competition also noted that they also thought about children who are underweight, malnourished and of stunted growth in Uganda that would benefit from those bananas if value was added to them.

"For our project we added value to sweet bananas and made banana porridge. This is a highly nutritious porridge, with minerals such as potassium as well as calcium, Vitamins A, C, and B6 which are all essential for proper nutrition," Namwanje exhibits her marketing skills as she explains her product.

The process

Using an easy and affordable method, they dried the sweet bananas in an oven, crushed them into powder form and later sieved it to have fine flour.

"In this, we applied the skills we were taught such as; packaging, using polythene bags and also designed an attractive logo for identification of our product in the market but also to attract customers. To further market the product, we applied communication skills to talk to our customers to get them to know about our product," Bawooza says.

Furthermore, they applied skills

such as research about their product by using online sources but also talking to experts in the field who were of great influence and importance to their project. They also carried out direct sales and advertised their product directly to fellow students.

Kelisha Mariam Byarugaba, a Senior Two student of Mengo Senior School,

says she also gained a lot of business skills. "I got interested in participating in the programme because I needed to unlock the mysteries of successful businesses. I realised you may want to start up a business where you have to produce quality products but then your business collapses because you lack the market or because people do not know about your products and services," Byarugaba narrates.

It is that background that informed her team to start a marketing competition - Development Initiatives for Startups (DIS360) which comes in to market other people's businesses, goods and services.

"We do this through publicising people's products on social media, signing fliers and banners, using billboards and maybe in the future, we will have billboards and adverts in media to make our client's business known thus enabling businesses to survive in Uganda," Byarugaba says.

Among skills they employ is creativity: "To improve the entrepreneur background of our country, young people should start by identifying problems and challenges in their communities and develop entrepreneurship ideas out of these," she says.

The winning team will travel to London in August this year. They will go to know the Start-Up scene in Europe through short-term internship; site visits. Such opportunities are life-changing and crucial in equipping skills to students and shaping their paths for the future therefore students should participate and make use of all such opportunities.

WHAT STUDENT SAY

"To unlock the mysteries of successful businesses, you must know how to market what you produce. You may want to start up a business where you have to produce quality products but then your business collapses because you lack market or because people do not know about your products and services."

KELISHA MARIAM BYARUGABA, A SENIOR TWO STUDENT OF MENGO SENIOR SCHOOL

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ZULAIKA NAMWANJE, SENIOR FOUR STUDENT AT MENGO SENIOR SCHOOL

VITAL VOICE

Get the right skills

Important for students to be equipped with business skills especially early time in their education is to open their minds. To move from thinking in one direction to all go to university, get a degree and have a job in a big organisation use you also know that is not works. Imagine a student who has business skills and is managing at the secondary or even primary level, won't be better entrepreneurs and run successful businesses than an entrepreneur who is just trying to figure it out now while in business?

MUKASA, MARKETING OR/ TRAINER AT CHRYSLER OF MARKETING

