

Technology will worsen job loss – experts

By Wilson Manishimwe

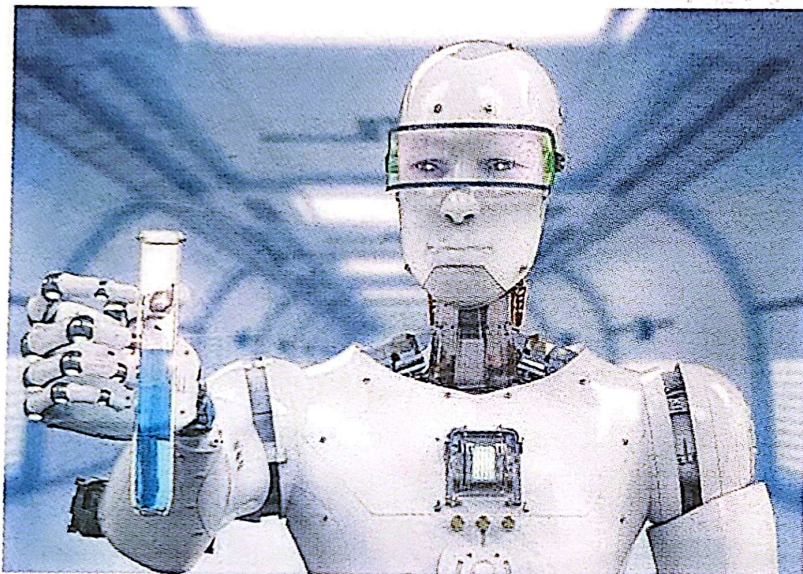
The increasing automation of workplaces is likely to worsen the already staggering unemployment rates in the country if deliberate interventions are not put in place to make the workforce adaptable, experts have warned.

Robots and computers for control, sensory feedback and information processing at workplaces is a fast-growing trend that is not only seen to cut costs, but also improve efficiency.

"Robots will take over the jobs. We, therefore, need to re-skill the people. They should be able to fit in the new environment and work alongside these machines. It is a challenge to us as a country and industry leaders to ensure that we give people the relevant skills," said Patrick Ngolobe, the chief executive officer of Africa Executive Leadership Solutions.

Ngolobe was speaking during a talent management and succession planning conference held at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Kampala recently.

He argued that workplaces are



Although robots perform certain tasks with ease, human resources also perform public relations and field responsibilities

looking for multi-skilled labour. "For example, a bank driver should not only drive cars, he should also do a bit of banking, help with accounts or work at the reception."

According to *Forbes* magazine, 47%

of all employment opportunities will be occupied by machines within the next two decades. The magazine also says about 80% of Americans believe that they will be able to maintain their livelihood after the prophesied

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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robotic boom.

Martin Sutherland, the global director of PeopleTree Group, a South African-based human resource consulting firm, however, argued that despite the fast digitisation of the workplace, certain core aspects of the workplace will remain and that is where people need to focus.

"Corporations will always look for products and ways of selling their products. The means to deliver these may change, but human resources remain at the core of their development," he said.

Moses Mbubi, the president of the Human Resource Managers Associations of Uganda, agrees with Sutherland. He argues that although

digitisation presents with job security threats, previous experiences such as the industrial revolution have proved that all it takes is re-skilling.

Mbubi added: "A robot will solve a problem related to data faster, but human beings will continue managing relations."

Status quo

Many banks in Uganda are adopting the mobile banking system, which Mbubi says will have an impact on tellers. He, however, said there are other skills that cannot be affected by digital banking initiatives, for example, going to the field and interacting with customers on bank value propositions.

In 2016, Apple and Samsung supplier Foxconn reportedly replaced 60,000 factory workers with robots, reducing the employee number from 110,000 to 50,000.

According to BBC, since September 2014, 505 factories across Dongguan, in the Guangdong province, South China, have invested £430m in robots, which is likely to replace workers.