

OPPORTUNITIES NEW APPOINTMENTS ADVICE HUMAN RESOURCE ISSUES

Vocational training council will address skills gap

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Within the expanded East African Community market, Uganda is lagging behind in terms of its labour productivity and investment in training, including in the more capital-intensive area of science and technology education. The training deficit is most acute for in-service training and this is combined with the fact that the pool of skilled workers is inadequate. In addition, the attitude towards business, technical and vocational education and training (BTJET) can be described as negative. Some associated challenges include limited labour market information, a mismatch between skills and available jobs; limited career counselling and few public private partnerships (PPPs) in the education sector.

In order to address the above challenges, the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE) supports government initiatives aimed at improving



Job creation should be at the centre of Uganda's education system

education in the country. FUE fully agrees with the key priority reforms set out in the BTJET strategic plan 2012/2013-2021/2022, and is also ready to work with the Government to establish a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) council.

The establishment of the TVET council will help to address the current co-ordination challenges within the sector, address the skills gap and mismatch, strengthening employers' participation in skills training. This will create a strong BTJET organisation and a management controlled by all major stakeholders, building a unified organisation for skills development. This will make work requirements the benchmark for all BTJET qualifications and eventually reform the system of financing BTJET to achieve sustainability.

Employers agree with raising

We need to change the notion that as a country we are good at drawing plans we do not implement

be mainstreamed in all aspects of Uganda's education. It is important for each stage of education in the country to deliver clearly defined skills, knowledge and attitude sets.

The success of the skills development strategy will depend on the combined efforts of the Government, employers, trade unions and individuals. Employers are responsible for training, retraining and developing their employees to meet their business needs, and where possible, they should assist in their employees' long-term development. In return, employers want to recruit and retain the right people.

We need to change the notion that as a country we are good at drawing plans we do not implement. Strict adherence to what has been agreed on will be necessary to achieve success at the implementation level. The setting of clear and realistic

targets will be necessary while providing for regular monitoring and evaluation of progress. Thus, the public and private sectors need to co-operate more closely in order to ensure that people enter the workforce with the necessary skills to drive productivity.

TVET council will fundamentally address the current weaknesses in co-ordination in the BTJET sub-sector. The proposed framework needs to take into account facilitating structured interaction between the employers and service providers of BTJET at all levels. Regular interface should be considered at national and school levels.

There should also be a deliberate effort to improve the flow of information as well as compiling the same to inform future policy actions. In other words, a labour market information system should be put in place, preferably by the gender ministry with support from all the relevant stakeholders.

Furthermore, governance structures of the BTJET institutions should be reviewed with a specific focus on increasing their autonomy and demanding more accountability as well as transparency in their operation. Improving the linkage between schools and the employers should be considered within the new governance structure.

The right momentum has been set for skills development in Uganda so let us capitalise on it and deliver as expected for skilling Ugandans. We already have the right and strong leadership within the education sector and the gender ministry.

The writer is the executive director Federation of Uganda Employers

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