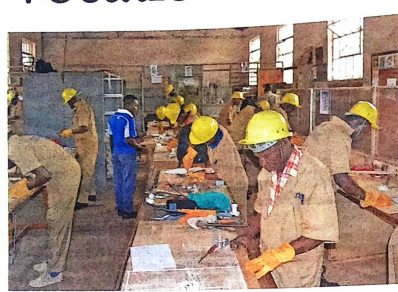


By Umar Nsubuga

Michael Mulindwa trained as a mechanical engineer. Yet, he says he struggled to fit into his role as his father's motor vehicle garage. He could not handle some cars, especially those with the latest technology. Their electronics system is more advanced and requires specialised training. His puzzle was solved at Nakawa Vocational Training Institute. He enrolled for a vocational course in mechatronics and his worries are now history. The relatively new discipline combines both electrical and mechanical systems. The course also infuses elements of robotics, electronics and computer engineering. This is the first course of its kind in the country and is pioneered by Nakawa Vocational Training Institute, with support from the Japanese government. This is just one of the many vocational skills whose demand is on the increase because of advances in technology. Yet, the available labour force, is largely ill-prepared as Mulindwa was. Multi-national firms are investing millions of dollars, expanding their operations in Uganda. According to a 2016 World

Vocational training key



Vocational students in class. The education ministry is on a nationwide campaign to sensitise Ugandans about the value of vocational training

Bank brief, the government has increased its capital investments significantly. In the last four years, capital investments have increased by 126% and nearly doubled from 4.3% to 7.6% of GDP. Going forward, such investments are expected to

increase in tandem with the aspirations of transformation that are stated in the National Development Plan and the National Vision 2040. For instance, up to \$90 worth of investment is expected in Uganda's oil sector over the next two to

three years. The increased activity in construction and other secondary-tier sectors is expected to stimulate productivity across the entire economic value chain, to drive growth. Increased investments generally generate more

employment opportunities. Therefore, the need for skilled workers in different fields, particularly specialised fields like the oil and gas sector, is set to rise significantly. The document further states that in the past, the

system of education placed emphasis on arts. Adding that, consequently, school leavers sought entry into white-collar jobs and educational job seekers than job training. It further states that technological changes and industrialisation necessitates adequate skilled manpower to meet the growing demand for skilled labour. This has led to the establishment and improvement of vocational institutions in the country. There are 146 government-funded vocational institutions and over 600 private vocational training centres. The institutions are equipped to train people in skills essential for higher agricultural productivity, diversification of the economy and industrialisation of the production system. Many graduates from vocational institutions have set up carpentry workshops and craft shops. Meanwhile, others work in upcoming industries and many more are targeting the oil and gas sector, especially welders. Many of these will need certification by a competent body in order to

to end unemployment

qualify to work in the sector. James Mugemwa, the assistant commissioner in charge of vocational education, says vocational skills remain relevant to everyone, regardless of their academic level. If, therefore, goes without saying that everyone should consider undertaking a vocational skill to remain relevant and expand one's horizons. The directorate, established in 1972, has expanded so as to train more students. To facilitate vocational training, the Government has introduced mobile training units and a trainee of trainers programme. President Yoweri Museveni recently said government is considering setting up a unit within the ministries of works or education, will be mandated to oversee the construction of physical infrastructure within schools across Uganda. Museveni justified the proposal, saying private firms often contracted by institutions of learning to construct these structures are expensive, and only care about making profits. He said by building its own capacity,

the Government will reduce on the costs and improve efficiency. The president said local communities will determine the locations of the polytechnics. They will be expected to be directly involved in the implementation of the entire programme. The training programmes will be based on the economic activities and training needs in the area. The Government is striving to promote appropriate skilled training for communities, to enhance their capacity to create jobs, become more productive, increase production at household and local community levels in a bid to reduce and, eventually, eradicate poverty. There are many idle and unemployed people in villages and urban areas. The skills acquired also create opportunities for



Students learning how to make metallic water pipes. Vocational training will go a long way in reducing unemployment, especially among the youth, in Uganda

participating in activities such as agro-processing thus providing inter-sectoral development linkages," she says. The creation of employment and income-generating projects is instrumental in poverty alleviation. The skills acquired also create opportunities for

Why technology is a key through the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET-LEAD) project, institutes look to improve their employment-oriented vocational training management, as well as to disseminate their experience to other TVET institutions

Alex Nsubuga, a retired university lecturer, says many industries had acquired new technologies, especially in electro-mechanical systems and in some cases, were employing experts from other countries to operate, maintain and repair the machinery and equipment. Mugemwa says vocational education has the potential to curb the high unemployment rate, since many people will have the skills to start their own jobs and even employ others, a move towards job creation.

Most job surveys show companies are sponsoring workers for training outside the country, where such technologies exist. The state minister for higher education, Dr. John Chrysostom Muyingo, says the funding of technical institutions needs to be increased. Most educationists agree that business, technical and vocational schools should be the nod that strikes a path through the country's sea of unemployment, but it definitely needs more support. Muyingo notes that the Government intends to increase funding to the new Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board, increase unit costs for caption grants, scale up the non-formal training programmes and provide instructional materials to Uganda technical colleges for students to do real-life projects as part of their exam requirements. Mugemwa says Uganda can now address the critical issues to firmly cement efforts to transform itself into a country with a critical mass of skilled people. Mugemwa says vocational education has the potential to curb the high unemployment rate, since many people will have the skills to start their own jobs and even employ others, a move towards job creation.

THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY

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Mr. Joel Cusi Gaba
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Mr. Zephaniah Mutiso
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for purposes of realizing sustainable inclusive national development.

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In consonance with the national theme, we are looking forward to seeing more employment opportunities created through enhanced investment in public infrastructure that takes into account the rights and freedoms of the worker.

We congratulate H.E. the president, and all the workers in Uganda on the Labour Day 2019.

Do visit the commission at our head offices on plot 7, Luthuli Class Bupitoli, or our website: www.eoc.go.ug. Write to us on info@eoc.go.ug or call our toll free line: 0800-100440.

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