

Get skills that will keep you relevant in today's job market

By Michael Kanaabi

There is a common saying nowadays that: "The illiterate of the 21st Century are not those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."

That is the reason many people are going back to school for refresher courses even after attaining PhDs. But, even with all the academic certificates in their cabinets, some still find it hard to get gainful employment.

However, there are a number of skills in demand within the local and international market. These skills are also a gateway to self-employment and one does not need a lot of capital to get going.

Car mechanics

Philip Wakaka, a vocational tutor, says with the increasing number of cars on our roads, the demand for mechanics keeps growing.

"However, the difference is that the trade is shifting from manual to computer and electronically-aided diagnostics," he says.

Wakaka says whoever is looking at joining the trade needs to go beyond being an apprentice at a motor garage.

"They need to study motor vehicle electronics and understand computer diagnostics if they are to be relevant to the market," he adds.

Wakaka says electricians are also on demand.

"Ranging from installations, wiring to repair of electronic gadgets, you cannot go wrong as an electrician," Wakaka says.

Skills needed to fix gadgets, such as computers and mobile phones, are on high demand too.

Beauty professionals

Cosmetologists are on demand as more people take their appearance seriously. Whether you specialise in hair, skin or makeup, you will have an income as long as you perfect your trade.



Engineers fit windows on a bus at Metu Zhong Industries in Namanve, Wakiso in March. People with such practical skills remain on demand as others cry of unemployment

Construction

The construction sector is also another area of interest, according to Majid Kaggwa, a construction manager.

Kaggwa says the demand for trendy tilers, for example, outstrips supply.

"Tilers who can do work that suits hotels and high-end apartments are in short supply. We sometimes source them from Kenya, while bigger construction companies go to as far as Asia to bring in experts," he says.

Information technology

The Information and communications technology (ICT) sector is also growing fast locally and beyond.

Joshua Kabengwa, an IT consultant and recruiter, names information security as one of the fast-growing areas.

"As more companies shift their operations online, the desire to

breach these storages by hackers is greater than ever and so is the need for information security experts to keep this information safe," he says.

Software developers, programmers and cloud computing experts are also on high demand.

Companies also need data and business analysts with strong statistical backgrounds integrated with ICT to break down market segments, understand customer trends and reach their target markets, Kabengwa says.

Medicine

Medical skills remain on high demand too. Since almost every profession goes hitech, e-medicine and medical engineering are some of the new emerging areas that those interested in keeping in demand should explore.

Digital marketing

As social media takes root, digital marketing skills geared towards generating more visits and leads are employing many currently.

Soft skills

For traditional jobs, there are a number of traits, call them soft skills, that recruiters are looking out for and those who possess them do much better than their peers in the job market.

Joan Nakaye, a human resource consultant, says: "Creativity, for example, is becoming more important in an environment where new challenges call for new ways of solving problems. Persuasion skills, ability to collaborate with others, adaptability to various situations and good analytical skills are crucial to getting hired these days" she says.