

BY REAGAN SSEMPIJJA

OVER 12,000 SCHOLARSHIPS RESERVED FOR VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

Uganda has a total of 146 public technical colleges and 800 private ones under the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET). Colleges usually enrol students who are unable to afford high tuition fees for the university. However, even with the relatively lower fees asked for by the colleges, many students are cannot afford them.

Upon this, therefore, BTJET, through the Government and other stakeholders put up scholarships for the academically vibrant, but financially crippled students every year. The irony, though is that most students or parents don't even know about the available scholarships.

The body supports young people pursuing vocational training such as carpentry, tailoring, mechanics, masonry, among others. The goal of the programme is to alleviate poverty by empowering youth and equipping them with the necessary skills to compete in the job market. It also aims at reducing unemployment, as well as supporting their families.

Hajat Safinah Museene, the commissioner for BTJET, says the body has three intervals within which scholarships are awarded. The intervals include Primary Seven, Senior Four and Senior Six. Museene added that the available scholarship placements are through community polytechnic and technical school admissions.

AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIPS

"Primary Seven leavers who need scholarships should apply. We currently have 39 technical institutions with about 75 scholarship placements annually," Museene explains.

She adds that at this level, those interested in the scholarships need to apply in time. The applicants also need



Engineering students with their tutor at Nakawa Vocational Institute in Kampala

to ensure that they have the required score, with at least credit three in the respective subjects that are essential for the course that one is applying for.

At O'level, BTJET gives out scholarships at certificate level and at diploma level. Museene says some of the courses available for scholarship placements include electrical installation, carpentry and joinery, tailoring and knitting, motor vehicle mechanics, plumbing, among others. Also available at certificate level are bricklaying and electrical engineering.

"In addition to the engineering courses, we also give out scholarships in health-related courses, such as nursing and midwifery, clinical medicine among others. In the category of health sciences,

we have 100 scholarship placements available for eligible students every year," Museene says.

For those interested in psychiatry at certificate level, Museene says there are over 100 scholarships available annually. In midwifery alone, 120 scholarships were made available this year, in the technical, vocational institutions available in the country. the nursing course also has 100 placements available this year.

"When it comes to Senior Six, there are over 320 government scholarships given out in five technical colleges across the country, every year. For nursing and midwifery at Senior Six level, there are over 150 offers in only four technical colleges in the country," Museene says.

On top of those, BTJET annually has 120 placements

in colleges of commerce in business courses, such as commerce and business administration. They can be accessed in only five technical colleges across the country, at the moment.

"We also give out scholarships to those who take up courses in teaching. With these, we usually give out 80 scholarships. However, they have been increased to 100," Museene added.

In addition to the Government scholarships, BTJET also receives scholarships from private entities, such as Madhvani Group. Museene says Madhvani gives the colleges over 50 scholarships per year, in various courses.

"For the past five years the number of available scholarships has been

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In addition to the Government scholarships, Madhvani gives the colleges over 50 scholarships

increasing steadily, by 2% every year. This has been a tremendous increase and today, we give out between 12,000 and 15,000 scholarships every year to vocational students. The most competitive courses for scholarships are usually nursing and midwifery, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, pharmacy and plumbing," Museene explains.

HOW TO GET A SCHOLARSHIP

Museene says the first step is looking out for the available scholarship placements. She says most students do not even know about some of the scholarships that BTJET offers hence missing out.

"After finding out the available placements, a student can then apply for the scholarship they want as long as it is in line with their academic results obtained. Results are crucial when

choosing people to be awarded scholarships," Museene explains.

She adds that applicants have to meet the minimum academic requirements at P7, S4 and S6. For instance, if a student is applying for an engineering course after their O'level, they need to have passed mathematics and physics with at least a credit three. For those applying for health professions, like nursing and midwifery, pharmacy and clinical medicine, they must have passed biology and chemistry, with at least a credit three in O'level and A'level.

"We also have cut-off points for scholarship placements. Each applicant who attains a grade higher than the cut-off points usually stands high chances of being shortlisted," she adds.

For those who apply for scholarships at S4 level, the applicants are subjected to interviews, which take place in June every year. These are usually for students who apply for health profession courses. Marks from the interviews are used to assess the quality of the applicants. Those who pass highly are shortlisted for the available scholarships.

"For Senior Six applicants, BTJET usually does national selections for all the scholarships across the country. The challenge we face is that most students do not want to take placements in upcountry colleges," Museene said.

Details of available scholarships offers can be accessed on www.btvet-uganda.org or at all vocational colleges under BTJET