

# Learning, training institutions should target global needs



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One of the factors singled out as key contributors to youth unemployment in Kenya is insufficient vocational and professional training that has resulted in increased skills mismatch. The youth require such skills to enable them get better jobs and empower them to tap entrepreneurial opportunities. In today's global economy where the labour market is demanding skills for specific occupations it is necessary to combine theoretical knowledge with practical skills that match the needs and demands of the job market. This is only possible by having in place quality technical training that is not only market driven but also address-

es the requirement of present day workplace. There is need for increased attention by stakeholders on the role of education and training in enhancing Kenya's global competitiveness.

To increase participation in the workforce, an effective basic and vocational education and training sector in the country is required to help employing entities exploit new technologies, drive productivity improvement across the economy, and give opportunity to the youth who are job ready for global job market.

## Skills trends and challenges

The focus on labour issues has rarely been sharper, and the importance of industry connections is more valuable than ever. Job ready approaches will act as significant drivers of demand in the job market driven by industry led skills training by technical institutions.

Global challenges that are being experienced in the skills competence application among others include the changing skills market-for supply and demand, which has burdened providers with added complexity, risk and uncertainty with

indications that industry growth projections are no longer linear coupled with uncertain funding capability by the government, the trainees are more demanding and competition stiff.

Recent reports indicate that graduate degree holders in Kenya are now going for clerical jobs which were meant for Diploma and certificate holders an indication of shrinking employment space hence the need for emphasis of technical training which will equip one with hands on knowledge and skills for technical jobs rather than white collar jobs which are limited.

The global trends in technical education, according to research indicate that the skilled people are increasingly moving between countries in response to changing job market demand.

This grants a significant opportunity for re-skilling, training and accrediting migrant workers.

Such an approach of offshore training has been adopted by China and India, the two largest international training source markets.

Likewise, European Union and Australian skills training

providers have begun investing heavily in the country delivery as a model for international education as a way of positioning skills need to match global standards.

Technical training institutions in Kenya have to content with this rapid change and align accordingly.

Further, new industry partnerships are becoming broader, deeper and more tailored training with respect to skills in demand.

As competition intensifies including new competitors from outside the technical training sector industry, new partnership models with an aim of broadening or customizing training is a must do for Technical training institutions.

Embracing this approach will make the Government strategic vision 2030 being attained and Agenda 4 as set forth by the country's leadership being a catalyst to the need for various skills drives the economic development for benefit of its citizens.

Recently, the focus on Blue economy opens up the job market where skills needed with respect to unlocking the economic potential of marine sector is key in setting the agenda

on which skill areas teaching and training should focus on.

Institutions providing technical training need to adapt in fundamental ways, specifically, they will need to become more responsive to new learner requirement and industry, collaborate with other sectors, innovative across all aspects of trainer and trainee lifecycle.

## Bridging skills gap

The government in partnership with the World Bank is implementing the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities project (KYEOP) 2016-2021. The aim of the project is to increase employment and earning opportunities among targeted youth across the country with an aim of reaching 280, 000 youth during the period.

It has four components: Improving youth employability, support job creation, improving labour market information and strengthening youth policy development and project management.

While this is commendable, it is not adequate and more partnerships that are similar are needed in order to provide funds to support youth-skill development agenda and cater for the large number of youth in

the country to become employable in the global labour market.

## Way out initiatives

Most important is the need to develop more specialised training centres that are of global standards.

Additionally, providing incentives triggers to support private companies particularly the ones in mining and oil sector, like Base Titanium, to provide professional skills development by ensuring curricula, training standards match market and skills demand hence easing transition from training to employment.

This will bridge the gap that exists on extractive skills among others. Restructuring of formal and non-formal education systems to ensure relevance of technical training in response to the changing patterns of employment, the needs of labour market and rapid pace of change in technology and communication is a matter of urgent priority in order to address industry and employer needs, which will see skilled youth employable locally and globally.

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