Nine technical institutes to benefit from sh166b loan

By Moses Muteende and Moses Walubiri

As enrolment in technical and vocational education rises, eight technical institutes selected from four regions of the country will be revamped with a Shs45bn (about sh166.5bn) loan from the Islamic Development Bank.

The Parliament last week gave the education ministry a go-ahead to secure the loan.

The northern, western, eastern, and the central regions will each have two technical institutes revamped.

The funds are expected to be used to renovate structures, to buy modern equipment for the institutes and to review the curriculum.

The technical institutes to get a fresh injection include Kisoro in Mubende, Lutungu in Ssembabule, Kabale, Birembo in Kibale and Natalie in Agago.

The others are Nkoiko Memorial Technical Institute in Mayuge, Minaakhu Technical Institute in Oyam, Moyo Technical Institute, and Moroto Technical Institute in Napek.

The state minister for higher education, Dr John Chrispyomug, explained to Parliament recently that considering the uniqueness of Karamoja as a sub-region, a technical institute will be built there.

Muyingo, who is the MP for Baranyi Constituency, argued that although each technical institute will focus on a specialty of skills, some of them, such as for Information Technology, entrepreneurship as well as innovation will be taught in all the schools.

"We are responding to the demands of the world of work for marketable skills and higher standards of trained output through the use of upgraded training curricula and modern equipment. We will emphasise international accreditation for all our graduates," Muyingo explained.

Specialisation

Kitovu Technical Institute will be revamped to specialise in electronics and telecommunications, Moyo Institute will focus on manufacturing and Moroto Institute will focus on tourism, hospitality and mineral development.

Muyingo explained that the project is expected to produce workers with highly marketable skills required in the labour market as part of the Government’s initiatives to address the high rate of unemployment in the country.

Indicating that shs45bn was planned in the 2019/2020 budget for the rehabilitation of technical institutes, Muyingo informed Parliament that the Government would continue revamping the technical institutes and equipping them with the necessary facilities.

The minister revealed that out of the 80 technical institutes in the country, 16 are newly constructed and 22 have been rehabilitated by Government.

Minister’s Advice

Dr John C. Muyingo, the state minister for higher education, explained to Parliament recently that considering the uniqueness of Karamoja as a sub-region, an additional technical institute will be built there.

MPs weigh in

Supporting the approval of the loan, Kagara County MP Michael Timungu said:

"Technical education is the game-changer for our economy. Asian Tigers experienced sporadic economic growth because of technical education. Kenya has more technicians than us; which is why we keep employing many of their technicians."

Adjourned Woman MP Jessica Abubak said the reason she had to support the loan request is because such interventions are necessary to address the high rate of unemployment in the country.

Her view was supported by Kaliro West MP Joseph Ssewanga, who admonished legislators who were pushing for a technical institute in each of their constituencies, arguing that it is not practical.

"What we need to do is to get adequate resources to improve and equip the existing technical institutes. Some districts have small populations that they cannot sustain a commercially viable technical institute," he argued.

Pallas County MP Jacob Opolot, who is also the Parliament education committee chairperson, implored fellow legislators and the Government to stop looking at technical education as an alternative for dropouts, but as the most important form for turning Uganda’s economy around.

Why boost institutes?

Reports show that countries, such as the Asian Tigers — Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan — have invested heavily and successfully adopted policies not only in university and polytechnic training, but also in technical and vocational education. This has gradually resulted in the emergence of a highly skilled workforce.

The gradual increase in enrolment at vocational technical institutions has been attributed to the several calls made by the Government, civil society and educationists, encouraging Ugandans to join vocational institutions.

Enrolment goes up

Enrolment in vocational and technical institutions has increased, according to the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE).


The 2017/2018 education sector annual performance report also shows that between 2016 and 2017, the enrolment in business, technical and vocational institutions shot up by 109,305 students, marking a 3.2% increase.

Meanwhile, according to the findings, enrolment at universities dwindled from 193,307 in 2015/2016 academic year, to 179,067 Students in 2016/2017, a decline of 14,240 students.

The report says the figures were drawn from both private and public vocational and technical institutions.

NCHE carries out the survey on the state of higher education every two years.

Saul Waiqulo, the NCHE spokesperson, says: "The increase is attributed to the unemployment problem mainly faced by university graduates."

Studies show that the growing unemployment in most African countries has forced large numbers of the youth to pursue employment in the informal sector, mostly through self-employment.

The World Bank reports show that almost eight of every 10 workers in most African countries are in the informal sector — most of them are in agriculture or in urban informal economic activities.

In Kenya and Rwanda, for instance, reports show that three out of four workers are employed in the informal sector.

In Uganda, 80% of the economy is in the informal sector, which requires more vocational and technical graduates with additional skills.