

University course re-design could solve high unemployment rate

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In 2016, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics revealed that 90 per cent of Ugandans under 25 years were unemployed and 58 per cent of total population unemployed. FILE PHOTO

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By POLYCAP KALOKWERA

According to National Planning Authority (NPA) statistics released in 2017, at least nine in every 10 Ugandans who have completed any form of education are unemployed.

Experts believe that despite having many sectors with huge employment potential, the big skills gap is partly responsible for the high unemployment rate in the country.

In 2013, while at centennial celebrations for Ibanda Kibubura Integrated Primary School in Ibanda Town, President Museveni criticised educationalists for promoting arts courses which he said are responsible for the high level of unemployment among university graduates.

This year while at Gulu University's 15th graduation, the President warned public universities against wasting time and resources on what he called 'meaningless courses' and instead focus on sciences and research.

"The courses you are running here at the university, which problems of the society will you solve? If you answer this question carefully, you will appreciate the courses you are giving to learners here. Don't train people just because we have a university, but they should be able to solve society problems," the President said.

Transformative learning

In a bid to address the rising unemployment crisis, some institutions for example Gulu University have adopted transformative learning methods as a model of preparing students being implemented under project called Transforming Employability for Social Change in East Africa (TESCEA)

The four-year project is being implemented by International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications in four partner universities with the aim of improving learning experiences for as many as 3,000 graduates by 2022.

Course redesign

The initiative looks at re-designing courses to suit societal challenges and scale up

development in the country.

Education expert based at Aga Khan University, Kenya Edward Misava Omabajo says graduates' unemployment crisis has persisted because most universities have failed to cope with rising pace in skills development required in the competitive job market.

“Our higher education is really suffering in terms of faculty development, teaching and learning and that is why it is important to re-design courses that will enhance skills in terms of faculty understanding,” Omabajo says.

He notes that many universities don't have a link to the job market and do not even know what skills are expected of graduates.

Teaching model

Gulu University Vice Chancellor Prof George Openjuru Ladaah says the model of teaching in Uganda is partly to be blamed for the increasing graduates' unemployment.