

BTVET boss tips parents, students on technical, vocational education

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Oyesigye is the UBTEB executive secretary. And as the country continues to push the skills agenda to the forefront, he admonishes students and parents to join in. Courtesy Photo

In Summary

- Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, (BTVET) has been applauded as the way to go the world over and Onesmus Oyesigye, the executive secretary, Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board, the assessment body of BTVET in Uganda can't agree more.

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By Desire Mbabaali

An old student of Katunda United Primary School in Mitooma, Oyesigye sat for his Primary Leaving Examinations in 1982. In 1983, he joined St. Leo's College, Kyegobe for both O and A Level up to 1989.

“Before I could go for higher education, there was an individual who guided me and told me; ‘You need to do a course that can quickly earn you employment so that you can sustain yourself. That propelled me to go for a diploma in Hotel Management at the National College of Business Studies in Nakawa [Currently MUBS],” he shares.

Joining the workforce

Emphasising the beauty of skills-oriented courses, Oyesigye notes that while he did his final paper, he had a job waiting.

“I graduated in 1991, worked up to 1997 and went back to school and did a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in accounting at Makerere University up to 2002. In 2003, I enrolled for certification with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Uganda and chartered in 2006. Then, opportunities started opening,” he notes.

He served as head of accounts and finance in the President's Office from 1991 up to 2008 when he joined Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) as a project regional accountant up to 2012.

Meanwhile, he enrolled for a Masters in Business Administration at the Uganda Management Institute in 2009. Between 2012 -16, he served as the deputy executive secretary-finance, human resource and administration and acting executive secretary of UBTEB (June 2015-April 2016).

Skills agenda

Currently, he is the executive secretary UBTEB. And as the country continues to push the skills agenda to the forefront, the executive secretary admonishes students, parents to join in .

On behalf of the assessment body, when asked to share the general picture of business, technical and vocational education in Uganda, Oyesigye notes that this can be seen in the different policies that have been put in place.



He further shares that the 1992 Kajubi Report had a recommendation on vocational education and in the background, people started working towards that until 2008 when the BTVET Act was established and the formation of assessment boards like UBTEB in 2009 to streamline training.

“And if you want to see where BTVET is going, look at the policy direction government is taking, curriculum reviews, and the skills environment which has been created, we see that the BTVET subsector is growing in the right direction. But the world over, training is changing as well as employment trends towards skills,” says Oyesigye.

Guidance

Tipping parents and teachers, Oyesigye urges them on the need to guide students to start thinking in the direction of the skills.

“...They can jump out of the mainstream to BTVET and still get qualifications with skills. But even after university, one can come back and get a skill,” he says.

To him, what we so often call academic failure is not actually a failure, but a case of misplacement.

“It is because you are telling a fish to climb a tree. But seat down with your children and identify what they want to do, and what they want to be, not what we are. After identifying their passions and interests, start developing the child towards that.

Whether they will succeed or not, it is not your business. Just allow the child to thrive in their interests,” Oyesigye emphasises.

He also encourages that at all levels, one can academically progress.

“For example, if your child wants to be an engineer and have the skills, after Senior Four, they can go for a national certificate for two years, practice for one year to gain more experience and then go for a diploma. After that, they can join University for a

degree and here, they will begin from the second year at universities like Kyambogo,” he says.

On the other hand, a Primary Seven leaver can join a polytechnic for three years and proceed to a national certificate, a diploma and a degree after. As for Senior Six leavers, these can go directly for a diploma for two years and then a degree.

The numbers

“The statistics we have as an assessment board are very promising. For example, the recent examinations we did; Nov/Dec, we had a total of 82,356 candidates, almost levelling with those who go to A level. In 2011, we had about 29,000 and that growth is enough to show you how the trend will be.

Female students are also increasing and we hope that with the reforms that are coming in; regulation, assessment and revisiting the curriculum, the numbers are going to continue increasing,” he is hopeful.

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