



We each have a role to play in solving unemployment

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MANY people have been excited over the recent graduation week at Makerere University. It is common during such graduation seasons for well meaning citizens to remind the fresh graduates to become entrepreneurs instead of joining the mob of frustrated job seekers.

It is true we live in difficult times when the country is churning out a high number of graduates annually and yet the number of available jobs is not commensurate, but we have a role to play in ending unemployment in Uganda.

Unfortunately, when you analyse the campaign politicking that is going on, none of the candidates seems to have a serious solution to the unemployment problem in Uganda.

Most of the candidates are promising to increase employment and salaries for those who are employed, but other than that, the details are scanty.

It is widely believed that the prosperity of nations and the welfare of citizens is primarily dependent upon individual initiative and endeavour.

Probably this explains why the Government adopted the stance that all important issues including the question of unemployment should be left to the mercies of liberalisation and globalisation.

However, the reasons for high rates of unemployment in countries like Uganda lie not so much in the poor investment climate (which has certainly improved) or in gaining market access to rich countries (which should have improved with initiatives like AGOA), but in the low level of our human resource capabilities, which has far-reaching economic implications.

The days of semi-skilled cheap labour are long gone. Rapid and continuous technical progress is changing the way in which production is organised as enterprises increasingly search for low cost jurisdictions and raise the basic level of skills and capabilities needed for a competitive labour force. Improvements in human resource competitiveness, if any, will therefore come from a cumulative effort to build a range of technical, managerial and institutional capabilities.

Be that as it may, instead of waiting for the Government to improve the employment situation and provide jobs, which is not going to happen soon, it is high time that the young men and women who constitute the labour force started thinking differently. Like Marcel Proust noted, the true voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

It is not uncommon to find a young graduate who really does not know what they want to do in life. Most people will just look for a job because they did a certain course at the university. In dealing with the problem of unemployment, it is important for people to find out their life purpose and pursue it. One is likely to excel in one's purpose than in anything else.

It is imperative for universities and other institutions of higher learning to envision, draw strategies and design contextually relevant courses and programmes that meet the present needs of the economy.

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