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## Enhancing Opportunities through Skills Development in Uganda: What are the Challenges?

### Overview

Over the years, a number of achievements have been registered under the Skills Development subsector in the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), such as establishment of community polytechnics, rehabilitation and construction of learning facilities and the rehabilitation of National Health Colleges.

However Uganda still lacks adequate technicians and artisans needed to meet the current science and technology demands for sustainable development.

In view of the strategic importance of skills development, Government through the Ministry of Education and Sports is shifting from offering academic- based courses to more competence-based skill training.

This policy brief explores the key initiatives for skills development and their financing as well as challenges affecting implementation. A number of policy recommendations have been made.

### Key Issues

- ◆ Limited development expenditure in spite of the dilapidated and inadequate physical infrastructure in many Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training institutions.
- ◆ Theory based education curriculum; which is academic and does not take into account the diverse skills needed for the country's economy
- ◆ Shortage of appropriately qualified and competent Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training instructors.
- ◆ Inadequate capacity of contractors and lack of due diligence which has delayed many infrastructure projects.

### Introduction

The Government is committed to skills development for the population, as an instrument of empowerment through acquisition of appropriate skills at all levels of training. To that effect, training institutions both private and public have been set up to impart skills and competencies relevant for the labour market.

On its part, the Ministry of Education and Sports has a Skills Development vote function to which funds are allocated every financial year.

The strategic objectives of the vote function are; (i) provision of craftsmen, technicians and other related skilled individuals to meet the demands of industry, health, agriculture and commerce as well as the teaching of vocational subjects and other related skills; and (ii) developing of occupational standards and competency based vocational training modules.

Skills development in Uganda is implemented through Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET).

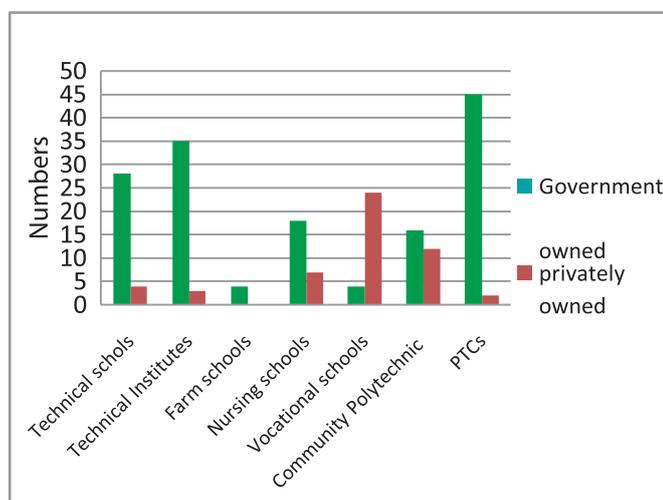
## Key Initiatives towards Skills Development

The Government through the MoES has initiated a number of projects to address the demand for skilled man power in the labour market. These include; the rehabilitation of National Health Training Colleges; development of institutions for BTJET and Technical Vocational Education Training P7 Graduate, as well as Nakawa Vocational Training Institute.

According to MoES statistics (see figure 1), the country has the following total number of BTJET institutions; 32 technical schools, 38 technical institutes, 4 Government owned farm schools, 25 nursing schools, 28 vocational schools, 28 community polytechnics and 47 Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs).

Although the majority of BTJET institutions are Government owned there are some which are privately run. The privately run institutions include 4 technical schools, 3 technical institutes, 18 nursing schools, 24 vocational schools, 12 community polytechnics and 2 PTCs.

**Figure 1: BTJET Institutions in Uganda 2012**



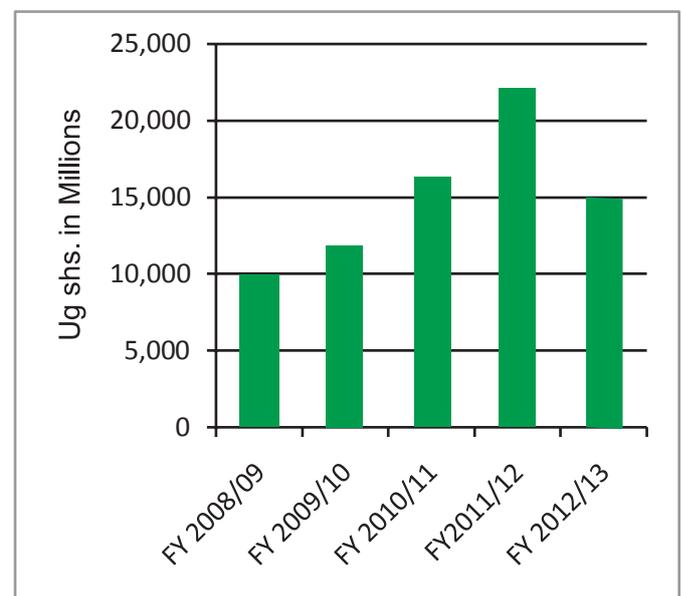
Source: MoES 2012 Statistics  
In BTJET institutions, capital development

funds are provided for the construction of administrative infrastructure; purchase of specialized machinery and equipment; construction and rehabilitation of learning facilities (classrooms and accommodation facilities); construction of libraries, and laboratories; as well as provision of science equipment and chemicals to Primary Technical Colleges.

## Financing

Over the medium term, Government budgeted for and disbursed funds to skills development. MoES skills development budget consistently increased for 4 years from FY2008/09 but declined between FY2011/12 to FY2012/13 due to inadequate funding (see Figure 2)

**Figure 2: Budget trends for Skills Development under MoES**



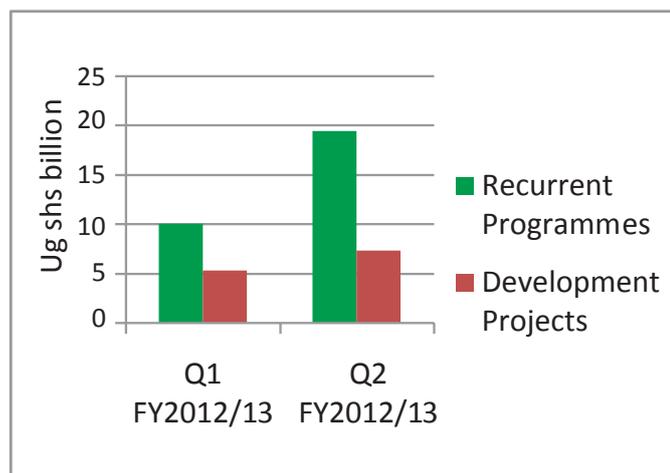
Source: **Approved Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure FY 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2012/13**

## Allocation of funds

A considerable amount of resources for skills development was allocated to recurrent activities compared to capital development. For example during Q1 FY 2012/13, Ugshs. 10.1

billion was allocated to recurrent programmes while Ugshs.5.33 billion was allocated to development projects, see figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Allocation of funds to recurrent and development programmes under Skills Development.



Source: MoES Q1 and Q2 FY2012/13 Progress Reports.

It is important to note that the core components needed for skills development require both recurrent and development programmes hence the need to allocate more funds to development expenditures.

## Implementation Challenges.

### (a) Theory based education curriculum

The BTVET curriculum is academically focused and does not fully cater to the skills needed in the labour market. Reasons for this are attributed to the inherent biases within the education system where general education programmes are prioritised and given preference by parents, teachers and students over vocational education programmes.

### (b) Dilapidated and inadequate physical infrastructure

The physical infrastructure of many BTVET institutions is dilapidated and inadequate to

cater for the increasing numbers of students following the introduction of Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education. In addition most workshops lack essential training equipment and tools. For instance, according to the Agribusiness Development Technical Report of Ministry of Education and Sports (2011), it was reported that farm buildings at Bukalasa Agricultural College were in a very poor state of repair. The livestock handling facilities had broken down and laboratories were dilapidated and dirty.

### (c) Shortage of appropriately qualified and competent BTVET instructors

According to MoES 2010 survey, it was reported that many institutions lack teachers. For instance at St.Peter's Technical Institute Bukalagi, none of the departments met the recommended ceiling of five teachers per department and those present were not on the government payroll.

### (d) Inadequate capacity of contractors and lack of due diligence

Many infrastructural projects lag behind schedule due to contractors' inadequate capacity to undertake civil works within the stipulated time. Some contractors abandon sites causing Government to lose money on uncompleted contracts.

For instance findings in the Quarter 2 FY2012/13 BMAU report indicate that civil works had stalled at Kyamuhunga Technical Institute in Bushenyi district.

The contractor had abandoned works after being advanced a payment of Ug Shs. 99 million. It was further noted that the contractor had not submitted a performance bond, a bank guarantee or work schedule and the bid security submitted was found to have been forged.

### Conclusion

MoES is investing in Skills Development as a cornerstone of enhancing opportunities for the population. However there are a number of challenges faced including the theory based education curriculum, dilapidated and inadequate physical infrastructure, shortage of appropriately qualified and competent BTVET instructors and the limited capacity of contractors..

### Policy Recommendations

(i) **Develop a comprehensive Public -Private Partnership in skills development.**

There is need to strengthen partnerships between MoES and the private sector such that employers and industry experts are involved in the development of occupational standards and training. This will help safeguard against the supply driven academic formal training programmes that have failed to provide graduates with competencies and skills relevant to the needs of the labour market.

(ii) **Strengthen the existing BTVET institutions.**

Structural improvements in the delivery of training should be a priority for the progression of skills development. This should include the rehabilitation and expansion of buildings and workshops, up-to-date training equipment and human resource development.

(iii) **Increase funding for Skills Development Projects.**

There is the need to increase funding for skills development projects under the skills development budget in the Ministry of Education and Sports. This should enhance quality of training delivered and support systems of quality assurance.

(iv) **Proper evaluation of contractors.**

Before a contract is awarded for civil works, management of the institutions together with MoES should ensure

that proper evaluation is carried out. Contractors who abandon works should be recommended for blacklisting by Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (PPDA) Authority and suspended from contracting work for Government of Uganda projects as per the provisions of PPDA regulation.

#### References:

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**MoES 2010**, "Paper on Skills Development", Kampala, Uganda

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