



Career guidance in schools is one of the ways that will enhance graduate productivity in today's job market

Career guidance policies in schools need to be reviewed

By Maureen Tweongyere

In my course of work as a career guidance practitioner and counsellor, I have interacted with thousands of teachers and students over the last 10 years across the country.

What has come out of these interactions is quite revealing. Many people working as career masters in schools are not professionally trained in guidance and counselling. They are simply picked from the school staff to take up the role as a by-the-way.

Having served at Makerere University Business School (MUBS) under the Career and Skills Development Centre, I appreciate the challenges we face as a country in career development.

We need concerted efforts to address them. Career masters in schools that I have interacted with, say they perform those roles as an extra responsibility, on top of teaching.

However, most of the teachers have not been trained in guidance and counselling and thus lack sufficient skills to guide students.

However, career guidance in schools is critical and needs to be prioritised. That is one of the many ways that will enhance graduate productivity in today's job market.

Career guidance is critical if the education system is to help children take career paths that fit within their natural abilities.

Some of the employment challenges we are facing as a country, are as a result of neglecting career guidance at lower level when children are starting out their education journey.

As a country, we need to refocus career guidance efforts at the lower ladder of the education system. The education ministry needs to create a policy that makes it mandatory for every school to have a full-time professional career guidance counsellor, whose only work is to focus on career guidance, and not teaching.



Maureen Tweongyere

We have relegated career guidance to the periphery of the education system, yet it is the heart of human resource development.

Parents who should be the primary players in career guidance, have failed. They spend less time with children and spend more time trying to make ends meet and provide for their families.

For instance, a typical Ugandan parent will leave home for work when children are still asleep and return late when they have already gone to bed.

The teachers who spend more time with learners at school, cannot prioritise career guidance because of their workload. Given the workload that teachers have, there is no time for them to concentrate on career guidance and counselling of individual learners. Their schedule cannot allow them to have time for the child to shape their career path.

The role of career guidance has been left to almost no body and yet it is very critical that the child finds someone in their life to walk with them, to identify and plan their career path.

TOP TIP ✓

We need to refocus career guidance efforts at the lower end of the education ladder. The education ministry needs to create a policy that makes it mandatory for schools to have a full-time career guidance counsellor.

This challenge is ultimately feeding into the quality of human resource that we have in the country.

Because of lack of career guidance, when a student enters university, the only thing that determines the choice of one's course is not what is within their natural abilities, but the grades they get at A'level.

That is why you get expressions like "I was given that course". They end up in programmes where their passion does not lie, but because it is the course that was given to them. So, they will just do it for the sake of getting papers. When they graduate, they cannot find jobs.

Even those who get jobs, their productivity levels are low because what they are doing is not in tandem with their passion and natural abilities.

This is the crisis Uganda's education sector is facing. We have people who have no clear sense of purpose - why? Because there was no body in their lives to shape their career path in line with their passion and natural abilities.

All organisations have a clear vision, mission and objectives that feed into routine activities. Like an organisation, every person from the time, should have a support system to shape their vision and what they want to be.

The writer is the director of the MUBS Career and Skills Development Centre