



Higher Education CORPORATE SCENE

Why higher education needs more funding



We have Tvet's training on mechanical engineering yet there are no top notch garages associated with them on the localities where they operate.

Studies show developed countries spend more on Tvet's that undeveloped countries.

STANDARD REPORTER

The centrality of Tvet's in the country's next phase of development is without a doubt. Kenya has actualised the Recognition of Prior Learning Certification Program.

Mount Kenya University has embarked on a plan to upgrade its ICT infrastructure as it implements its digital transformation agenda that is expected to significantly increase the use of digital technologies as it seeks to streamline and enhance educational processes.

At the same time, the University founder and chairman Prof Simon Gicharu has urged the local education sector to embrace technology as a way to power education.

"The deficit of teachers in the country is a big challenge because the population is increasing and the government is unable to employ all the teachers. The best way to address this issue lies in technology," said Gicharu, who is also the chairman Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD).

The university last week acquired 18 new interactive displays that will be fully integrated in all MKU's campuses and ODEL Centres.

Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD), France's development agency, finds a general low public funding across the countries. With Christine Uhera Gong'as as the lead researcher together with others, the study covered Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The findings published in December 2019 show that the six countries spent an average of only between 0.03-0.46 per cent of their GDP on TVEITS.

This compares much lower to developed countries that spend between 0.75-1.3 per cent of their GDP on the sub-sector.

For instance, Austria and Czech Republic spend 1.3 per cent of her GDP on TVEITS, the highest in the world as at the study period.

The AFD report proposes interesting financing options to increase the sub-sector investments.

First is on the need to streamline the sector strategic priorities and coordinate with all related ministries to optimize the public available resources.

Such a sector-wide prioritization is a vital vehicle to crystallize the political capital necessary to advocate and lobby for increased resources for TVEITS. This would also create reverse funding through cost saving and removal of duplications spending programmes.

Second proposition is to design and implement performance based or demand-based funding systems.

To actualize this however, there will be need for proper linkages with industry and a good system to structure and implement the correct performance metrics.

The twin goals here are to synergize on industry linked income generating activities and establish strong interconnections with the local environments.

For instance, we have Tvet's training on mechanical engineering yet there are no top notch garages associated with them on the localities where they operate.

This commercial type of investments can be done through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). The triple benefits from this is that it will allow a market based approach to acquire the most modern machines and equipment, provide a relevant and practical training environment for the students and the institution share in profits of the business.

This model has been tried in a number of hospitality training institutions like the Urali College. At sector level, it may however require a robust policy to facilitate a private sector based approach to running such commercial ventures outside the political and bureaucratic entrenchments for public institutions. Good lessons to learn from here is the prisons department well acknowledged for its progress in high quality furniture.

Such competences can be commercialized to mobilize funding for TVEITS.

A third strategy that could immensely benefit the sector is the introduction of a training levy for the affiliated sectors of the various TVEITS institutions.

Such levies are chargeable on payrolls of industries for which the TVEITS are building skills for. At policy level, such levies would be a tax allowable expense as an incentive to the industry players.

Again, this would require a good partnership with the related industries, good political support and transparency in the management of the special purpose funds to which the levies are mobilized into. As per the AFD report, this was being piloted in Viet Nam at the time of the study.

Such initiatives are not only designed to be highly profitable, but also to maintain the institution's relevance in the market place and as a preferred trainer of choice in the industry.

However, perhaps the goldmine of them all and the least thought off source of sustainable funding for Tvet's is their alumni. Successful former students have become the greatest sustainable resource for any/learning institution.

The caveat here is that the Tvet's must demonstrate a sense of responsibility, care and accountability during the student days for the alumni to be willing and proud to give back to their alma mater. Unfortunately, and tragically so, this is the weakest link in our local public Tvet's.

Varsity banks on new ICT infrastructure to drive digital agenda



Mount Kenya University Chairman Prof Simon Gicharu unveils an interactive display tool at the university. He is accompanied by Ice Chancellor Prof Deogratius Jaganyi (centre) and Deputy Vice-chancellor, Academic and Research, Dr. Mercy Jane Kamande. (John Muchacha, Standard)

The integrated use of interactive displays and smart classrooms will enhance learning experiences and elevate the e-learning and content experience. These interactive displays will serve as a dynamic

platform for content delivery, fostering participation, and interactivity. The university intends to build Smart classrooms across the campuses and a recording studio for content development.

Prof Gicharu said in undertaking the infrastructural upgrade, the university was trying to be forward thinking.

"We need to ensure that we are alive to where the world is going, embrace technological transformations, and embrace some changes that may be unpopular," he said at a function where the board handed over the interactive screens to MKU's management.

MKU Vice Chancellor Deogratius Jaganyi said the institution is embracing a digital transformation agenda that would significantly improve the interaction between learners and lecturers.

"Today we mark another milestone in academic online learning, I was reflecting the other day on the fact that we are phasing out generation Z and soon welcoming generation Alpha in the higher education system. This generation is hyper connected, technological and diverse. They have grown in a digital environment where all knowledge is just a click away," he

said. "This reminded me that it is high time for MKU to fully embrace the fourth industrial revolution by embracing technology mediated modalities of teaching and learning in order to meet teaching and learning needs and expectations of the current generation."

He added: "The interactive screens will indeed support content delivery and as the name suggests, they will enhance interaction between the students and their lecturers. The interactive displays will be useful in supporting collaborations, conferencing and presentations for postgraduate students hence promoting a vibrant research ecosystem in the University."

"All this will go a long way to enhancing the transformative quality of teaching in e-learning and conferencing experiences at MKU. We will definitely exceed the expectations of our number one stakeholder, that is, the student." (John Muchacha)