


# Tackle skilling materials' cost

The escalating cost of vocational training materials, compounded by heavy taxation, is threatening Uganda's skilling revolution. Skilling is a key pillar for our transition to upper-middle-income status as a nation, but institutions are reporting unsustainable financial strain as imported equipment like sewing machines, welding tools, and ICT devices face huge customs duties and VAT, inflating prices before they even reach workshops.

Taxes on essentials, from engine diagnostics tools to fabric, are forcing institutions to either cut programmes or burden students, undermining efforts to promote skilling.

This calls for policy recalibration because, while some taxed materials serve broader public demand, the

Government needs to prioritise vocational training. The latest census report indicates that over 70% of the population is under 30 years, coupled with a glut of university graduates chasing scarce white-collar jobs, skilling is non-negotiable. Vocational education empowers youth to create livelihoods, instead of just seeking jobs.



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However, without affordable tools, institutions cannot deliver quality training at scale. Tax rebates or direct refunds for training materials would alleviate this bottleneck, ensuring workshops remain stocked without compromising accessibility.

Uganda cannot rely on traditional employment models because it produces about 700,000 individuals for the job market year in year out, but only absorbs 238,000 (34%) (National Planning Authority, 2020).

Vocational graduates, equipped with practical skills, become entrepreneurs, fuelling grassroots economic resilience.

The Government's push to integrate vocational training into lower secondary education has already boosted enrolment, but policy must evolve beyond classrooms: startup capital like it is done with those graduating from the presidential skilling hubs and tax waivers for graduates could strongly transform skills into sustainable enterprises.