Uplifting youth employment with DDT

By Shan Radcliffe   23 Nov 2017

Following the launch of the Demand-Driven Training Toolkit by the Rockefeller Foundation in South Africa at the end of October, we chatted to the company's Africa Regional Office MD, Mamadou Biteye about DDT and how it will alleviate youth unemployment.

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⊞ *In a nutshell, what is the Demand-Driven Training for Youth Employment Toolkit (DDT) and why do we need it?*

DDT toolkit is a compilation of best practices by institutions that provide work-readiness skills to youth, and assist in bridging the gap between skills acquired through formal education and labour market skills as required by employers.

⊞ *What are some of the most common skills gaps we currently face?*

A myriad of skills are required by the working world, and also depending on the working environments. Some of the key 'soft skills', i.e. the interpersonal attributes which are currently required but tend to lack include service skills, communication skills, time adherence, self-confidence, motivation, negotiation skills. On the harder skills, digital and numeracy skills gaps are common.

⊞ *What is the difference between "demand-aligned training" and "demand-driven training"?*

Youth skills development programs can be classified based on their market alignment in three categories, (as defined by Making Cents in a study sponsored by Microsoft):

- Demand Driven Training (DDT) refers to those skills development initiatives that are customized to respond directly to the specific requirements of a job role, for an employer or a group of employers, and lead to placement in employment or self-employment. Demand-Driven programs develop and prepare youth for specific job roles.
- Demand-Aware programs train youth for jobs in a number of high-growth sectors by focusing on developing their general employability skills;
- Demand-Aligned programs prepare youth for jobs in a specific sector.

▦ *Are there specific industries or roles that DDT is better suited for implementation?*

DDT is applicable across all sectors because it seeks to develop a strong link between formal training and actual industry requirements. I it is a methodology, a systemic approach to linking skills to demand.

▦ *Is the DDT something that we can and should be introducing at an earlier, school-based level and why?*

DDT can be introduced at an early age. Most importantly, the soft skills highlighted by DDT can be acquired at an early stage of development, for instance collaboration and communication skills, just to name a few.

▦ *Why offer the DDT free of charge?*

The fundamental challenge in skills development in Africa and beyond is a gap between what is offered by formal education and what is needed by employers. DDT can only scale by being integrated and adopted at a macro level, which is the public education system.

However, at scale, it would ensure alignment of all stakeholders such as policy makers, training institutions and the labour market and thereby overcome the systemic failure that we are observing today. In addition, Africa is facing a huge challenge of youth unemployment, the DDT can help address this but only at scale, by being availed at no charge. This would stimulate adoption and implementation.

The no-charge model falls within the Rockefeller Foundation's mission of promoting the well-being of humanity, and we leverage on partnerships and their unique strengths to roll out such initiatives. Already, our partners have assisted in its design and will also use their networks for its dissemination. Together, we will see it distributed and its impact felt at scale.

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.
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