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**USING THE “PLATFORM FOR PRACTICE” APPROACH AS THE
ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATION**

TABLE OF CONETENTS

Abstract.....	Page 3
Introduction.....	Page 4
The Platform for Practice Approach.....	Page 4
Why use the Platform for Practice approach.....	Page 5
How to use the Platforms for Practice as solutions to unemployment.....	Page 6
Professional but cheap services.....	Page 6
Giving effective power and control to all players.....	Page 7
Consistent innovations and more work generated.....	Page 7
Why change to a new system.....	Page 8
Avoiding losses being caused by current system.....	Page 8
Positive Competition.....	Page 9
Perfect example of win win situation.....	Page 9
Proper career choice based on interest, ability and opportunity.....	Page 10
Increased hope and civic consciousness.....	Page 10
Role of government's and multinational bodies.....	Page 11
Conclusion.....	Page 11

ABSTRACT

One of the greatest challenges of our time is limited employment opportunities for people, especially youths. Many people are unemployed today despite having different skills and or abilities which can be utilized for the benefit of society.

As a result, there is a lot of (social, mental, spiritual and sometimes as a result, physical) instability that is developing in homes and societies in general due to the failure to have work opportunities for the majority of people.

If we all agree that people are the real vehicles of growth and development, we should seek for and promote approaches to permanently empower all qualified and able with equal opportunities to work/practice and make life better for themselves.

I'm proposing that all youths can organize themselves into "Platforms for Practice" based on their professions/training or current abilities from where they can exploit their skills into services and products to continuously market to the general public.

This I believe is the best way that all youths can be meaningfully and sustainably empowered, build reasonable hope and meet their life challenges, instead of waiting to get a job in the traditional job-based employment system. I'm talking of governments, companies and other organizations giving work opportunities to organized groups with particular skill(s) instead of giving jobs to individuals.

The Platforms for Practice can free our economies for more economic activities due to individual but jointly pursued interests to work for payment in the best manner.

This approach can spark continuous innovation and work as everyone willing and able struggles to innovate and create work for self and public gain.

There is no doubt that when people have work and what to do for a living continuously, they are more likely to avoid armed conflict, HIV/AIDS infection and other ills affecting people today.

The key issues in this approach are creation of a Platform for Practice as an approach that promotes opportunity for all qualified or able to practice; sustainable empowerment of individuals and groups; giving a necessary level of power and control to actors in the production (work) systems; developing/ growing individuals to have self esteem, vision and integrity; opening the world of work for better competition, more work and innovation; ensuring continuous skills development to meet changing needs ; and harnessing economies of scale through joint practice by those with a particular skill or skills and abilities in a more free environment.

USING THE “PLATFORM FOR PRACTICE” APPROACH AS THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATION

Introduction

I was delighted when I came across your poster inviting youths to participate in this year’s theme of “Building a secure future, seeking practical solutions” as part of the World Bank International Essay Competition for 2005.

This is because I have long harbored this idea of building Platforms for Practice through which I think I can build a secure future basing on my life’s obstacles.

The biggest obstacles I and most of my peers face in life today include finding ‘paying’ work to do, sustainably meeting daily needs, being sure of what to do as work and what to eat on daily basis, avoiding being taken advantage of, and meeting the challenges of continuous skills and knowledge improvement in our professions in particular and generally, being able “to have and give meaningful hope in situations of increasing scarcity”. Scarcity in terms of resources, options and opportunities to make life more meaningful by having ‘assured’ work and life fulfilling opportunities.

This arises from the rampant unemployment that many even educated (graduate) youths are faced with today in my society. Many youths have finished University or other levels or training only for the majority to fail to get work to do. This is making many youths loose hope not only in education, but in life as a whole because of a pervading failure to meet one’s current life needs and ensure a deserving future.

The Platforms for Practice Approach

I’m proposing that all youths can organize themselves into Platforms for Practice based on their professions/training or current abilities from where they can exploit their skills into services and products, which they can continuously market to the general public.

This I believe is the best way that all youths can be meaningfully and sustainably empowered to fulfill their careers, build reasonable hope and meet their life challenges, instead of waiting to get a job in the traditional job-based employment

system. I'm talking of governments, companies and other organizations giving work opportunities to organized groups with particular skill(s) instead of giving jobs to individuals.

The key issues in this approach are creation of a Platform for Practice as an approach that promotes opportunity for all qualified or able to practice; sustainable empowerment of individuals and groups; giving a necessary level of power and control to actors in the production (work) systems; developing/ growing individuals to have self esteem, vision and integrity; opening the world of work for better competition, more work and innovation; ensuring continuous skills development to meet changing needs ; and harnessing economies of scale through joint practice by those with a particular skill or skills and abilities in a more free environment.

Why use the “Platform for Practice” approach.

I believe that the Platform for Practice approach can answer the challenges of unemployment and job creation by providing an active multi-dimensional platform for practice to all graduates and other practitioners of a particular filed/ profession.

The main reason for this Platform for Practice is that we need to look at a solution to unemployment that gives equal opportunity to all qualified or skilled to practice their profession or to all with a particular skill or ability to exploit their skills or ability(ies).

This can best occur under the Platform for Practice, which is important especially today with the uncertain working environment, normally referred to as the job market. You must have noticed that the job market is limited, since a number of graduates with good degrees or able people aren't employed despite strenuous struggles to look for jobs. Yet jobs are what the majority of people depend on to earn a living or have a secure future.

Fundamentally, I believe that promoting a Platform for Practice approach with emphasis on service provision, other than waiting or looking for jobs is the best way newly graduated youths or all trained people in Uganda and elsewhere in the world can sustainably be empowered to practice what they studied or are able in.

This is mainly because we need to rise up head on to the employment and job creation challenge in our societies through initiatives based on **service provision other than jobs**. We have to move from looking at getting a job for oneself, normally so at the expense of others, and promote an approach where all qualified or able are enabled to practice.

I believe that what all trained youths need is an enabling environment to be able to utilize and market their skills by providing services or products to the general market. This is because not every body can get a job (read paid work) through looking for employment in terms of jobs. In many countries, the job seekers greatly outnumber the jobs available.

Such people can organize themselves into a Platform for Practice from where to generate work and market their abilities through services and products to all willing to use them.

How to use the Platforms for Practice as solutions to unemployment

My belief is that the organization being set under this Platform for Practice be membership based so that it has general appeal; where all qualified or with particular skills can join as members and practice; develop themselves and build meaningful hope. There is need to make sure that such people have clearly stated objectives, a mission and vision as well a framework (constitution or memorandum) on how to cooperate.

My belief is that it is through strengthening formal groups (Platforms for Practice) of people with such a skill or skills and also who share clearly stated joint interests to market their service(s) that all youths can be sustainably empowered for a bright future.

Professional but cheap services

If youths are organized under a platform for practice, they can be able to offer cheap/affordable professional services to society because of advantages of collective

practice. For example at Ultimate Media Consult where I work, we supply a package of up to 10 daily news items to radio stations at a monthly fee of between 200, 000-300, 000 Uganda shillings (between US \$100-150).

I believe that offering individual and group services to many organizations and individuals at the same time (through the Platform for Practice) would improve on any field's practice and service delivery to society, while giving a chance to all those qualified to practice their profession and earn a suitable living.

When I look at the kind of media services we deliver at Ultimate Media Consult, everyday I get convinced the media industry is gaining from our standardized practice since we strive to do the best (or risk failing to sell any news items or our other services).

Giving effective power and control to all players

This approach can also give strength, power and control to members of a particular platform for practice as individuals and as an organization since they will be fully registered and working organizationally. This can be a God sent opportunity especially given the many organizations that mistreat or under pay their workers. Here practitioners have a chance to negotiate whatever they are to engage in as near equals.

It is also worth noting that youths organized under such a platform for practice can contribute aptly to national people benefiting programs like immunization, elections, civic education etc by providing free or paid for services if contacted or contracted. At Ultimate Media Consult, we are offering public and media relations services, packaging and programming advice to many organisations and media houses free of charge. This is because we have the communication skills, we are organized, available and willing to contribute to the good of society- because we are a hopeful lot.

Consistent innovations and more work generated

More importantly, this Platform for Practice approach can spark continuous innovation and work as everyone willing and able struggle to innovate and create work for self gain. This can remove complacency of many workers in companies, organisations especially in government bodies who do little work because they are

assured of their pay at the end of the month. Companies will benefit from real tested people giving them services instead of traditional recruiting which sometimes doesn't bring the expected returns.

In addition, self-belief, empowerment and individual development, some of the lacking ingredients in promoting a secure future can be best built under this approach. Here, we can give people psychological, emotional strength in overcoming their challenges.

There is no doubt that when people have work and what to do for a living continuously, they are more likely to avoid armed conflict, HIV/AIDS infection and be more responsible in whatever they do in the environment they live in.

I'm convinced that the Platform for Practice approach can lessen the job market imbalance where not the best qualified necessarily gets the job or opportunities to work, by equitably distributing the few work opportunities available.

Why change to a new system?

I believe that skills are not like physical certificates that you will keep to show off in future. They need to be utilized if one is to continue remembering them and improve or master them to produce what can be consumed or useful to the society.

As you may have realized worldwide, the uncertainty of the job market has done a big damage to individual livelihoods and national economies. In Uganda, few people ever get to practice what they are skilled in, because of this uncertain exposure.

Avoiding losses being caused by current system

Also, the time many youths are spending out of training institutions waiting for jobs could be causing our national economies big losses in GDP and costing countries dearly in terms of development potential due to the expense of getting but not being able to use these skills or knowledge. The skills we are always told will drive us to progress.

That's why I'm convinced that this approach that is based on service provision other than jobs can go a long way in eradicating the unemployment in our societies and

through the Platform for Practice. This is because under this approach, youths will be better able to organize and provide quality services to society if everybody looks at what they can do and offers it to the general public (read market) through conventional business practices.

The platform for practice will not only enable members to be able to practice by exploiting the prevailing market conditions around the world in relation to their skills, but also to pursue skills development to meet changing field needs, and better service delivery due to advantages of collective practice (economies of scale).

Positive competition

We also needed to encourage positive (two-way) competition where employers also compete for qualified people's services. Thus give power or control to both sides (service providers and service users). For example as communication graduates compete to have their outputs/ stories appear in newspapers or stations; organising as professional service providers can ensure competition for their stories and media services by all media houses.

Also, I believe that coming together as qualified practitioners of a particular field is an important step in contributing to professionalising a field's practice.

Perfect example of win win situation

And need I say that all well-intentioned people and organizations will benefit from a one-stop center of practitioners and services of a particular field (under the Platform for Practice). I believe that this approach can give a lot of economic and social opportunities and advantages to all members and clients/ stakeholders including the general public.

For example, even organizations that are not financially strong can benefit from professional but low price services or products from members of a platform. This is on the understanding that members of a platform will be able to charge low prices since they spend less time and inconvenience on a particular task or one person's work.

Notably also, if well mobilised and empowered, members of a Particular Platform for Practice organization as skilled practitioners could offer their services on contribution basis to national people benefiting programs. I know many people who do or could give services for free if they are well mobilized and assured of basics (transport and meals).

Proper career choice based on interest, ability and opportunity

This approach is also necessary if we are to encourage a working environment where people are enabled to practice and develop towards well-chosen careers. In other words, we need to give graduates an opportunity to test the waters in relation to their skills and or abilities before they can settle on one section of their profession as a career.

We also need to understand that there will never be jobs for everyone, yet many people wrongly assume that there is such a thing as a job market for everyone to target. It is not true that all employers or people who start up business know what they want in terms of skills and what to do for the progress of companies or organizations. Many supposed employers are also looking for answers but also keen on maintaining their power. Therefore the best solution for those trained is to join together and offer services.

This is mainly so because while emphasis has been placed on failure of training institutions to train suitable people for the job market, there is profound evidence that the ‘job market’, grappling with changing needs and challenges may not know what they want in employees. Apart from genuinely being able to employ only a few people, some organizations/ companies continue to employ on “know who” and cost effective basis.

Increased hope and civic consciousness

This approach can give people real hope as empowered participants in the production system of society. I believe this can result into increased civic consciousness that can promote responsibility for themselves and others and the need to promote humanity.

In most of our societies today, it is increasingly becoming difficult to tell young people to go for and concentrate on education as a guarantee of a better future. Unless we find an urgent solution to unemployment, the future for many people is but bleak.

These and related factors have added to make the hope we all have in education a big joke. It is worth noting that many youths who have been equipped with skills without being availed an opportunity to practice them haven't been able to reap any benefits from their education and are slumping back to the cycle of poverty and begging despite being well educated or skilled. A main result of no or limited opportunities to work/ practice.

Role of government's and multinational bodies

But to be able to achieve any objectives under the Platform for Practice, members (youths) need to be armed especially with equipment that will enable them to practice since for many of us in the developing world, it is these that are largely lacking. Simple equipment like computers, video and photo camera's in the case of a graduates of Mass Communication like me and my colleagues can help enable practice and service delivery. This is where governments, multinational bodies like World Bank should come in.

Conclusion

In all, a platform for Practice as an approach has astounding potential to enable all qualified and with interest to practice and market their skills through service delivery and as well give all an opportunity to realize their full potential. I think this is the best way that we can then talk about having and giving meaningful hope to our living generations.

Ends

NOTE

This is an approach I have been practicing for the last more than 18 months through Ultimate Media Consult (U) Ltd which we formed as a platform for Practice to enable mass communication graduates and students to market their services and works.

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