

Rwanda is banking on workplace learning and training to increase youth employment and achieve its long-term development goals. However, a recent report highlights significant gaps that need to be addressed.

In 2015, the Rwandan government introduced the Workplace Learning Policy (WPL) to tackle the challenges of youth unemployment and the lack of employable skills. In August 2021, the Ministry of Public Service and Labour released specific guidelines outlining the implementation of Industrial Attachments, Internships, and Dual Apprenticeships.

The policy aims to better align education with labor market needs by promoting internships and apprenticeships tailored to employer requirements.

This initiative supports Rwanda's broader vision of becoming a middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income nation by 2050.

However, a study conducted by the youth rights organization AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA, in partnership with Never Again Rwanda and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, found that most employers are not effectively implementing the policy.

As part of the "Fit4Work" project which aims to prepare young people for the workforce through workplace learning policies, skills development, and career guidance the study surveyed 446 companies across the construction, manufacturing, and hospitality sectors. In addition, 42 officials from both government and private organizations were interviewed to gain broader insight into policy implementation and challenges.

Findings revealed low awareness and limited adoption; only 16% of companies had formal workplace learning programs, and 91% of employees reported receiving no training linked to the policy since its inception.

Small and medium enterprises faced the greatest challenges, often citing a lack of funding and staff to supervise interns. Some even charged placement fees, which discourage participation from low-income youth. Additionally, many internships are too short—nearly half last fewer than three months—limiting both skill acquisition and job opportunities.

Youth in rural areas or those studying specialized fields such as engineering face

further obstacles. Transportation and meal costs often make internships unaffordable, and there is no centralized system to help students secure placements.

The report also pointed to poor coordination among government agencies. The Rwanda TVET Board, Ministry of Public Service and Labour, and Rwanda Development Board frequently operate in isolation, while private sector involvement remains minimal.

Employers noted that graduates from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs tend to be better prepared than those from general education. However, many still require ongoing training to keep up with changing technology and market needs.

To strengthen the system, the report recommends making dual training a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on experience—a core component of TVET programs. It also suggests extending internships to at least 12 months to allow for more meaningful skill development.

Providing incentives for employers who offer training could also enhance participation. The report advocates for the creation of accredited, industry-based training centers that deliver standardized, market-relevant skills.

Improved coordination among public institutions responsible for education, labor, and industry is essential for effective policy implementation.

Additionally, community-based internships—where local businesses train youth within their communities—could increase access, especially for disadvantaged groups.

“Rwanda’s youth are ready to work,” AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA stated. “Now it’s time to ensure the system works for them.”