

Making Entrepreneurship Promotion in Post-Conflict Countries Work for University Graduates: Lessons Learnt from Rwanda

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Abstract

For a post-crisis country, Rwanda's socio-economic performance is highly appraised. Its business environment is greatly appreciated by diverse local and international stakeholders. However, it also faces insurmountable challenges. While stakeholders lament about lack of skilled workforce in all domains, youth unemployment remains prevalent. Apparently, Universities are not producing the right people for the labour market. This situation can, to a very large extent, be attributed to the fact that the country's educational system, like many other things, is in a transition phase. The government has responded with an initiative to create entrepreneurship centres (ECs) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Alongside ECs, other key elements of entrepreneurship promotion initiative include: initiation of different entrepreneurship platforms (trade fairs, study tours, etc.), integration of entrepreneurship education and training in the curricula of HEIs. In spite of these positive developments, which are in line with country's orientation and market demands, there is still a disconnection between what the HEIs do, and what the labour market wants. From this backdrop, the paper reflects on what can be done to reconcile the work of ECs and labour market needs. Using a purposive sampling approach, six incubators – three each from state-owned HEIs and private HEIs - were selected and analysed. Also, six managers, and six owner-managers represented the market side. Structured questionnaires were developed and personal interviews were used to collect data and information. On the basis of the findings, the paper recommends key strategies for success.

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