

Investing in Young Workers

The high rate of unemployment amongst the youth globally, is a matter that can hardly escape the attention of governments. The fact that those in the 18-35 age group are seeking quality and decent jobs, places immense pressure on the government as the largest single employer and private sector employers to improve on their offerings.

The fact that there is now a more highly educated workforce, suggest that those entering the job market have an expectation that they will be appropriately remunerated. It is anticipated that the industrialized and developed countries of the world will be better placed to attract the biggest and best brains. The assumption can be made that the lesser development countries of the world are likely to encounter a challenge in keeping many of its highly qualified and talented persons employed on the home shores.

Sara Elder, the lead author of a United Nations Report on Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013, made the revelation that 31 per cent of youth in low-income countries have no educational qualifications at all, as compared to 6 per cent in lower middle-income countries. This presents a challenge in the recruitment of persons, based on the queries raised about the employability of individuals who fall in this group. The assumption is made that in the absence of formal or academic qualifications that such persons cannot be absorbed within the main stream of the job market. It is unfortunate that based on this thinking, many are ruled out from gaining suitable employment. In some cases they are not even considered or accommodated for an interview.

Taking a look at the demographic in today's job market, it is evident that there is an increasing number of younger persons being employed and occupying supervisory and management positions. This alone tells the story that employers recognize the value of the investment in younger persons. As these young persons grow and develop in their jobs and role, they amass a wealth and experience that serve the organization and/or enterprise in good stead both in the immediate and distant future. It therefore pays to attract young persons in the work force, but it is equally important to maintain their service.

Employers must therefore be mindful of the need to provide sustainable and quality jobs, and jobs which offer attractive remuneration packages and benefits. The crowning glory of this is the offering of security of tenure. In

this age where contract employment is becoming the norm, it is now seemingly possible that some individuals will change jobs more than twice or three times in their working life.

It is advisable that employers have an understanding of how important it is to expose young workers at an early stage. This means that employers should become involved in providing opportunities for work experiences, by offering employment options such as internships, work experience placements, apprenticeships or graduate programmes. Employers with a vision for the growth and development of their businesses will recognize that by providing such opportunities, it places them in a position to recruit employees with the right skills.

Employers who are mindful of the need to provide training to young workers, place themselves at an added advantage. This is so as new recruits will more than likely commit to working with the organization.

The total value of investing in young workers has been adequately summed up by Jennifer Lee, HR Director, Jurys Inn, who commented that, "Young people can come to the business with a different perspective, thinking outside the box, and ask managers 'why do you always do it that way? They can teach management to consider new perspectives in a positive way'".