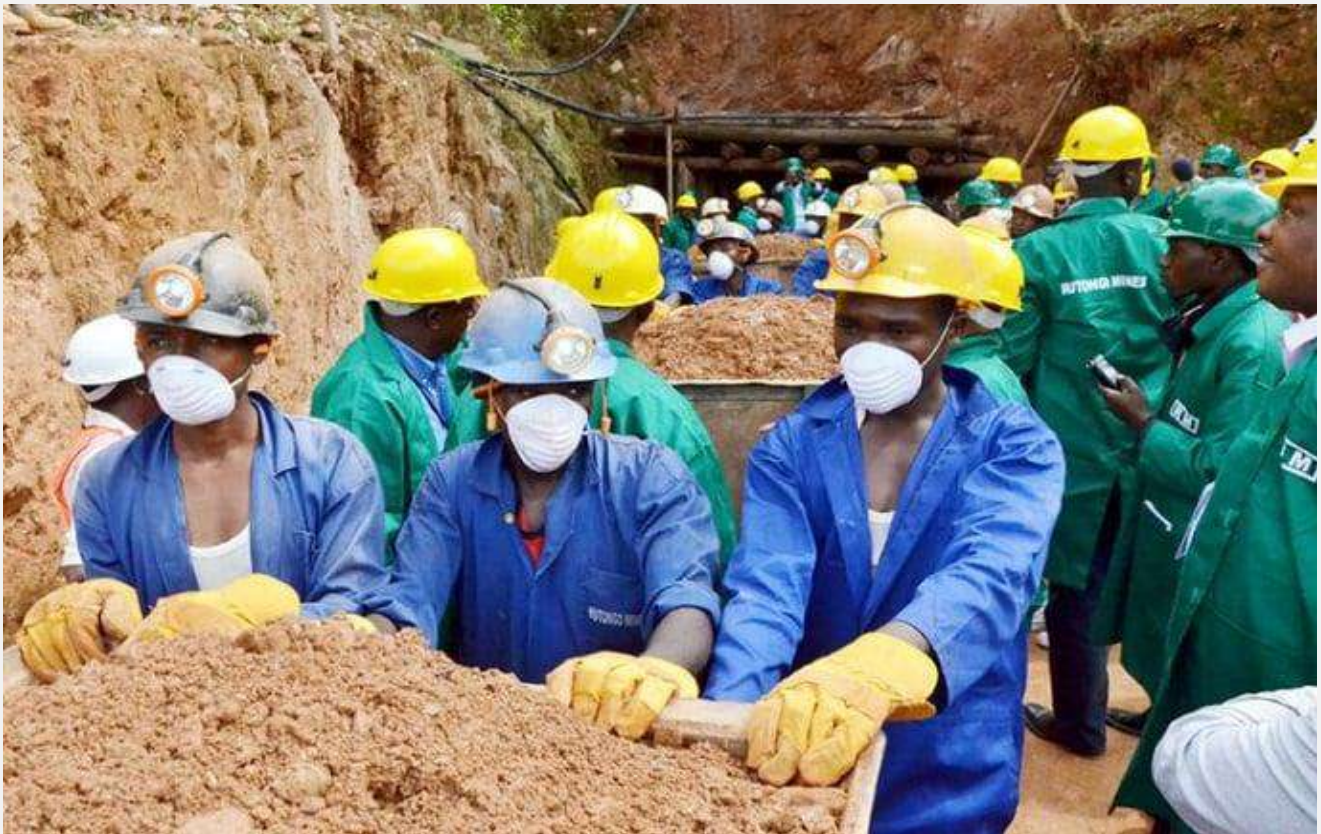




PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF THE WORKPLACE LEARNING POLICY IN RWANDA



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Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Executive Summary

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context Analysis

1.1.1. Labour Market Situation Analysis

1.1.2. Skills Supply and Demand

1.1.3. Workplace Learning Interventions

1.1.3.1. Industrial-Based Training (Apprenticeship)

1.2.1. Massive Short-Term Vocational Training

1.2.2. Reconversion Programme

1.2.3. Five Year Youth Employment Programme Proposed Interventions

1.2. Analysis of Policy framework on Work Place Learning

1.3. Rationale of the assessment

1.4. Objectives of the assessment

1.4.1. Overall objective

1.4.2. Specific objectives

1.5. Scope of the assessment

Section 2: Methodology of the assessment

2.1. Methodological Approach

2.1.1. Qualitative sample and methods of data collection

2.1.2. Quantitative sample and methods of data collection

2.2. Data processing and analysis

2.3. Data Credibility, Validity and Reliability

2.3. Assurance of data quality control

2.4. Ethical Considerations

Section 3: Findings of the assessment

3.1. Demographic profiles of respondents

3.2. Recruitment of interns and duration of WPL in companies

3.3. Workplace learning policy awareness among employers in companies

3.4. Stakeholder collaboration in implementation of workplace learning

3.5. Collaboration between training institutions and workplaces for internship/industrial attachment

3.6. Gaps and Challenges in implementation of workplace learning policy

3.6.1. Gaps in Implementation of Workplace Learning Policy

3.6.2. Challenges Faced in the Implementation of Workplace Learning Policy

3.6. Causes and effects of inadequate access to Workplace Learning opportunities for youth

3.6.1. Causes of Inadequate Access to Workplace Learning Opportunities for Youth

3.6.2. Effects of inadequate access to workplace learning opportunities on youth

3.6.3. Suggestions from participants on ways of increasing access to workplace learning opportunities

3.7. Guidance, supervision, and support during workplace learning

3.8. A SWOT analysis of career orientation and guidance programs in Rwanda's public and private institutions

3.9. Perceptions on the effectiveness of school-based learning in skill development

Section 4: Conclusions and recommendations

References

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1:Gender of respondents.....	20
Figure 2:Distribution of respondents by district.....	21
Figure 3:Existence of Written Policies for Workplace Learning.....	23
Figure 4:Responses on whether employers in the sampled companies were aware of workplace learning implementation guidelines	24
Figure 5:Responses on whether employees in the sampled companies received training on	25
Figure 6:Responses on Companies Collaboration with Training Institutions for Skill-Based Intern Recruitment.....	26
Table 1: Distribution of sampled key informants at National and district level	17
Table 2:Types and sizes of companies involved in the assessment	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 3:Duration of WPL in companies.....	22

ABBREVIATIONS AND**ACRONYMS**

AJPRODHO : The Youth Association for Human Rights Promotion and Development ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	
BDA	Business Development Advisors
BDF	Business Development Fund
CAGR	Compounded Annual Growth Rate
CSO	Chief Skills Office
DFI	Development Finance Institution
EPR	Rwanda's employment-to-population ratio
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIWLP	Guidelines on Implementation of Workplace Learning Policy
GoR	Government of Rwanda
HDI	Human Development Indices
IAP	Industrial Attachment Program
IBT	Industry-Based Training
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPRC	Integrated Polytechnics Regional Centre
KIC	Kigali Innovation City
LFS	Labour Force Survey
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIFOTRA	Ministry of Public Service and Labour
MINAFFET	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINICOM	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MINIC	Ministry of ICT and Innovation
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
MVT	Massive Vocational Training
NAEB	National Agriculture Export Board
NEP	National Employment Program
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NSDEPS	National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy
NST1	National Transformational Strategy
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSDYE	Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy
PSF	Private Sector Federation
PSGYE	Priority Skills for Growth and Youth Empowerment
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
RP	Rwanda Polytechnic
RRT	Rapid Response Training
RTB	Rwanda Technical and Vocation Education and Training Board
SACCOS	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations
SDF	Skills Development Fund
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SSC	Sector Skills Council
TVET	Technical and Vocation Education and Training
UOR	University of Rwanda
WDA	Workforce Development Authority
WPL	Work Place Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rwanda's economic transformation is guided by strategic policies such as the National Strategies for Transformation (NST1 and NST2), which have contributed to growth across key sectors like agriculture, services, and manufacturing. However, challenges such as low human capital, high youth unemployment, and persistent skills gaps (NISR, 2022) continue to hinder economic progress. To address these issues, the government has prioritized skills development and job creation, with workplace learning (WPL) playing a central role in equipping the workforce with relevant skills. Programs such as internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training have been introduced to bridge skills gaps and improve employability.

The government has reinforced WPL through policies such as the National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy and the Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy, which emphasize collaboration between educational institutions and the private sector. Additionally, initiatives like the Priority Skills for Growth and Youth Empowerment (PSGYE) program aim to enhance employability, improve the quality of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and strengthen governance in skills development.

Despite a strong policy framework supporting WPL—including the Workplace Learning Policy (2015), NST1 and NST2, and the TVET Policy—significant challenges remain. Therefore, AJPRODHO found it imperative to assess the performance of Rwanda's Workplace Learning Policy, identify gaps if any, and provide recommendations to enhance workplace learning as a key strategy for improving employability and aligning education with labor market demands. The specific objectives of the assessment were to evaluate the effectiveness of policy implementation, identify coordination challenges among stakeholders, determine the causes and effects of inadequate access to workplace learning opportunities, and propose policy reforms and structural improvements.

Methodology

The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to ensure methodological rigor and triangulation. Qualitative data was gathered through a desk review and key informant interviews with 62 youth and 38 officials across 11 districts, offering in-depth insights into workplace learning implementation. Quantitative data was collected from a statistically representative sample of 446 companies using structured questionnaires to capture employer perspectives. The study was conducted across 11 districts in Rwanda, including Nyagatare, Ngoma, Musanze, Rulindo, Muhanga, Huye, Karongi, Rubavu, and Kigali City (Kicukiro, Gasabo, and Nyarugenge). These districts were selected to ensure a comprehensive understanding of workplace learning implementation across different regions, considering urban and rural dynamics.

Key Findings

Company Size and Capacity for Workplace Learning:

The majority (67%) of sampled companies are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with fewer than 30 employees. Only 53 companies had more than 50 employees, and just 26 had more than 70 employees. This suggests that most companies operate on a small scale with limited capacity to accommodate workplace learning opportunities, particularly in industries requiring specialized skills. Workplace learning opportunities in larger companies are highly competitive, which may disadvantage youth from underprivileged backgrounds.

Recruitment of Interns and duration of internship in the sampled companies:

It was reported that medium-sized formal companies required formal applications and academic credentials for interns, limiting opportunities for youth without formal education. In contrast, smaller informal businesses, including Integrated Craft Production Centers (Udukiro), had a more flexible approach. However, inconsistencies in recruitment processes created uncertainty for applicants, and some companies reportedly demanded payment for placements, creating financial barriers.

It was found that in 45.74% of the companies sampled, internship lasts for less than three months while in 40.68% companies it lasts between three to six months. In 11.43% companies, it extends up to a year, and in 2.24% companies it found that it goes beyond one year. Internships longer than three months often include stipends or wages, though generally low. Prolonged internships, while providing financial relief, may lead to exploitation, with interns being used as cheap labor without clear job prospects. These findings highlight the need for stronger regulations to ensure fair compensation and clear pathways from internship to permanent employment.

Existence of internal workplace learning policies in companies:

Over half (53%) of the sampled companies rely on verbal instructions rather than formal written policies for workplace learning. Only 16% have documented WPL policies, while 31% have no structured guidelines. The absence of written policies creates inconsistencies in implementation, leading to unclear expectations, rights, and responsibilities for both interns and employers. Without standardized policies, workplace learning experiences vary across companies, increasing the risk of exploitation and unequal access to opportunities. Structured and transparent policies are needed to enhance fairness, clarity, and effectiveness in WPL programs.

Workplace Learning Policy Awareness Among Employers in Companies:

The study found that a significant number of employers in the sampled companies were unaware of workplace learning implementation guidelines, despite Rwanda's efforts to promote Workplace Learning (WPL) through various policies. The delay in introducing implementation guidelines in 2021 contributed to this lack of awareness, as well as the absence of a structured communication strategy. Key informants noted that many employers still perceive WPL as a new concept, which has hindered its integration into workforce development strategies. Additionally, findings revealed that 91.7% of employees in the surveyed companies had not received any training on Workplace Learning Policy Implementation. Even among the 8.3% who reported receiving training, indicated that they needed further training. This gap in training suggests that employers have not prioritized policy awareness and implementation, which could limit the effectiveness of WPL initiatives.

Stakeholder Collaboration in the Implementation of Workplace Learning:

It was found that before the introduction of implementation guidelines in 2021, stakeholder collaboration in workplace learning was minimal, with training institutions, companies, and policymakers operating independently. This lack of coordination resulted in inconsistencies in how workplace learning was implemented across different sectors. However, the introduction of guidelines has led to some positive developments, such as integrating workplace learning into district-level Imihigo (performance contracts), strengthening partnerships between companies and the Rwanda TVET Board, and accrediting some companies to issue certificates for on-the-job training. Despite these efforts, challenges remain, particularly regarding the private sector's active participation in workplace learning implementation.

Collaboration between training institutions and workplaces for WPL:

Collaboration between training institutions and workplaces for internship remains largely unstructured. It was found that in 90.8% of the companies sampled, interns secure placements independently rather than through institutional partnerships. Strengthening collaboration through policy enforcement, private-sector engagement, and institutional partnerships is crucial for effective WPL implementation and improving students' transition into the labor market.

Gaps in implementation of workplace learning policy:

It was pointed out that the effective implementation of workplace learning policy is hindered by governance and coordination challenges, including the Private Sector Federation's limited ownership of workplace learning initiatives, which affects advocacy and support. Informants highlighted ineffective coordination mechanisms that lead to fragmented efforts, duplication, and weak collaboration among government agencies, private sector actors, and training institutions. Additionally, a lack of skilled personnel and standardized impact assessment frameworks was said to further undermine program effectiveness. Financial constraints were also noted as a significant barrier, with institutions struggling due to inadequate funding mechanisms that limit the sustainability and expansion of workplace learning opportunities. Weak partnerships between training institutions and companies reportedly restrict student placements, as many employers hesitate to participate due to unclear expectations and resource limitations. These challenges underscored the need for structured coordination, stronger private-sector engagement, and improved funding to enhance workplace learning outcomes.

Key challenges faced in the implementation of workplace learning policy:

It was reported that private-sector engagement remains a major challenge in implementing workplace learning policies, as many companies perceive it as a financial burden and have minimal involvement in implementation. Lack of awareness of the WPL policy leads to low adoption rates. Additionally, some companies face a shortage of trained in-company instructors, reducing the quality of WPL. Resource constraints were also highlighted as a barrier, limiting the duration of workplace learning opportunities. It was noted that many students, especially those in rural areas, struggle with financial and logistical challenges in accessing workplace learning, while the demand for placements surpasses supply.

Causes of Inadequate Access to Workplace Learning Opportunities for Youth:

The study revealed that access to workplace learning opportunities for youth is hindered by several factors, including but not limited to a limited number of WPL providers, financial constraints, and lack of information. The number of companies offering internships remains low compared to the growing demand, creating a shortage of placements. Financial challenges, such as transportation, meals, and accommodation costs, were said to prevent many youth from participating, particularly those in rural areas. Additionally, companies lack the financial resources, infrastructure, or willingness to admit interns for WPL due to perceived costs without immediate returns.

Effects of Inadequate Access to Workplace Learning Opportunities on Youth:

It was noted that the lack of workplace learning opportunities limits practical experience among youth, making it difficult for them to adapt to real work environments and reducing their competitiveness in the job market. High unemployment and underemployment rates were also linked to limited internship access. Additionally, securing internships was said to be particularly difficult for youth in specialized fields such as engineering and technology, where companies often prioritize individuals who require minimal supervision over those still in the learning phase. As a result, many youth experience delays in acquiring practical experience, further affecting their employability.

Effectiveness of school-based learning in skill development:

Interviews with WPL beneficiaries and providers indicated that while students from technical and vocational schools acquire practical skills that make them job-ready, those from general education schools primarily gain theoretical knowledge, particularly in social sciences. Workplace learning was acknowledged as essential in bridging the gap between theory and practice, enhancing students' adaptability to real work environments. Employers noted that while students from technical schools possess foundational skills, they still require hands-on experience, whereas general education graduates often lack sufficient practical competencies. Despite Rwanda's competency-based curriculum aligning with job market demands, rapid technological advancements necessitate further upskilling. Employers emphasized the growing preference for skilled, adaptable interns who can quickly integrate into digitalized workplaces, highlighting the need for stronger integration between school-based and workplace learning programs.

Proposed Policy Recommendation (Policy Reforms)	Rationale (Logical Basis) & Feasibility	Responsible
Review and update the National Workplace Learning Policy (WPL)	To address the identified persisting gaps particularly in institutional coordination and collaboration and to strengthen the policy and institutional framework for Workplace Learning (WPL).	MIFOTRA, MINEDUC in collaboration with relevant government and other development partners (CSOs)
Enhance Awareness, and Innovation	- To consider launching wide outreach programs to inform employers, employees, and educational institutions about the benefits and opportunities offered by workplace learning programs - Establish annual career development week aiming to link learners to private companies in need - of work-based learners.	MIFOTRA, MINECOFIN, and MINEDUC, Rwanda Polytechnic and TVET Board.
Define mechanisms to incentivize employer participation	- Standardize internship incentives and costs and improve allowance disbursement - RRA and MIFOTRA, MINECOFIN to provide tax incentives, subsidies, or grants to encourage employers to invest in employee training and development programs.	MIFOTRA to establish program for recognition and showcase businesses that demonstrate a commitment to workforce development through awards or certification programs.
Facilitate collaboration and partnerships	- To foster partnerships between government agencies, private sector employers, industry associations, and educational institutions to co-design and implement workplace learning initiatives. - Sign MoUs between institutions and companies - Appoint WPL focal persons. - To establish industry-led advisory boards or task forces to provide guidance on the design and delivery of relevant training programs aligned with industry needs.	MIFOTRA, PSF, AJPRO-JIJKIRWA, Never Again Rwanda to lead the creation of CSO centered annual Skills Development Index Report that will track the status of implementation of WPL policy against pre-established indicators.
Promote inclusivity and equity in workplace learning program	- To make a follow up to ensure workplace learning programs are accessible to all segments of the population, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities. - To provide targeted support, such as scholarships, mentorship programs, or transportation assistance, to facilitate the participation of underrepresented groups.	MIGEPROF, GMO, MINECOFIN, and MINEDUC
Align performance contracts with WPL targets	- Mainstream WPL into national projects and community-based internships. - Promote community-based workplace learning by engaging local companies to provide hands-on training for youth in their own communities. - Data Harmonization	MINEDUC, MIFOTRA, RTB and NISR
Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms	- To establish robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the implementation progress and outcomes of workplace learning initiatives - Put in place a MEAL plan to track the effectiveness of WPL - To collect data on key performance indicators, such as participation rates, skill acquisition, employment outcomes, and employer satisfaction, to inform evidence-based advocacy.	MIGEPROF, MINECOFIN, RTB, and MIFOTRA Civil Society Organizations/ Development Partners: AJPRODHO-JIJKIRWA, Never Again Rwanda, others.

Section 1: Introduction

Skills development and employment promotion are central to Rwanda's long-term vision of becoming an upper-middle income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050. While Vision 2020 laid the foundation for this transformation through a focus on knowledge-based industries, significant challenges remain, particularly the shortage of a skilled workforce to meet the demand for five million quality jobs by 2050. The current skills gap hinders business growth, limits investment, and slows progress toward a middle-income economy, as there are limited opportunities for skill development through employment and insufficient support for ongoing professional growth. To address this, the National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (NSDEPS) outlines a vision for a dynamic and responsive skills and employment ecosystem one where the supply of talent meets business demand, entrepreneurship thrives, SMEs expand, and job seekers, employers, and educators are effectively connected to support inclusive economic growth.

1.1. Background and Context Analysis

Whereas Rwanda aims to become a middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050, this vision is driven by strategic policies, including the National Strategies for Transformation (NST1) (MINECOFIN, 2020a) and NST2 (MINECOFIN, 2023). These policies and related interventions have contributed partly account for the socio-economic transformation and growth that Rwanda has experienced over the past two decades. The country has witnessed growth across sectors such as agriculture, services, and manufacturing. The 2022 population census (NISR, 2023) indicated that employment in agriculture was the most frequent branch of economic activity (53.4% of total employment). Since recent years, however, exports have diversified, moving beyond traditional commodities, which has boosted revenue and enhanced economic stability (World Bank & Government of Rwanda, 2020)

Key economic indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reflect this positive trend, indicating improved economic performance. The latest official data (NISR, 2024a) estimates Rwanda's GDP at current market prices to be RWF 16,355 billion in 2023, up from RWF 13,720 billion in 2022. The main economic sectors, namely, services agriculture, and industries contribute 45%, 26%, 21% respectively to the GDP. According to the World Bank (World Bank, 2024a), the country's GDP is expected to increase by 7.2% on average in 2024-26.

Nevertheless, the current low human capital remains an important constraint on growth. Rwanda's 2021 Labor Force Survey (NISR, 2022) indicated, for example, 64 % of employees in agriculture has no educational attainment compared to 40% in manufacturing and 27% in services. Other challenges facing the sustainability of Rwanda's economic growth include high youth unemployment and a significant skills gap (MINECOFIN, 2023). To address these challenges, Rwanda has emphasized skills development and job creation as integral components of its broader national development agenda. Central to this strategy is workplace learning (WPL), which is deemed essential for enhancing skills, improving employability, and ensuring that the labour force is equipped to meet the economy's evolving demands (Fox et al., 2016; MIFOTRA, 2015, 2021).

Workplace learning and national development objectives

Workplace Learning (WPL) is a vital tool in addressing the job market needs, including addressing the skills gaps. WPL is particularly important given the evolving nature of the job market and the skills it requires to support economic development needs and goals (Aprile et al., 2023; Noe et al., 2014). Cognizant of the critical role of WPL, Rwanda has placed it at the core of its aspirations to become a middle-income economy by 2035 and a high-income economy by 2050. The National Strategy for Transformation 2 (NST-2) (MINECOFIN, 2023) emphasizes the importance of skills development for driving economic transformation, enhancing productivity, and ensuring that the workforce is prepared for the changing demands of the labour market. WPL programs such as internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training have been rolled out to help workers acquire hands-on experience and develop both technical and soft skills necessary for career advancement (Muhanguzi, 2024; RDB, 2022; Republic of Rwanda, 2024) .

Research indicates that effective WPL not only provides workers with immediate skills but also contributes to long-term economic transformation by developing a labour force that is adaptable to the evolving job market and industry needs (Aprile et al., 2023; Hager, 2005; Noe et al., 2014). Moreover, the integration of WPL into education systems has been found to be associated with higher levels of employment, mostly in emerging economies where youth unemployment is a persistent challenge (Fox et al., 2016; Van der Heijden et al., 2016). Work Place Learning also directly supports job creation, particularly in Rwanda's key economic sectors such as manufacturing, services, and agriculture. Rwanda's Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy (2018-2024) emphasises the critical role of private sector investment in generating employment opportunities, with a particular focus on youth employment (Republic of Rwanda, 2024).

The Contribution of workplace learning to skills development

The Rwanda National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019-2024) (RDB, 2019) emphasizes the need for a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of Rwanda's key economy sectors. One of the main strategies for addressing this need is integrating WPL into vocational and technical education and training (TVET) programs. This approach is part of the country's aim to enhance education quality, which is meant to help students and workers develop and acquire practical, industry-relevant skills that employers highly value (MINECOFIN, 2023). This is consistent with WPL research indicating that aligning education with labour market demands enhances the productivity of the workforce and reduces the mismatch between the skills supplied by the education system and those required or desired on the job market (e.g., Alfeld et al., 2013; Andrei, 2021; Aprile et al., 2023).

WPL is also essential for addressing the skills gap in emerging sectors such as information technology, manufacturing, and renewable energy, which are identified as priorities in the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan of Rwanda Technical and Vocation Education and Training Board (RTB, 2020). The plan stresses the importance of partnerships between education institutions and employers to ensure that workers acquire the technical and soft skills necessary to succeed in today's constantly evolving industries. Research has shown the potential of such collaborations enhance the employability of graduates and address skills shortages in high-demand sectors (Aprile et al., 2023; Brixiová et al., 2015; Noe et al., 2014).

Government policies supporting workplace learning

Rwanda has adopted several policies reinforcing the role of WPL in achieving its national development objectives. One of those policies is the NST-2 (MINECOFIN, 2023), which stresses the need for skills development to improve productivity and competitiveness within the economy. Likewise, the National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019-2024) (RDB, 2019) emphasizes on enhancing skills through WPL by encouraging collaborations between educational institutions and the private sector. This collaboration aims to create an environment where students and workers can gain practical experience that aligns with workplace demands. The Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy (2018-2024) (Republic of Rwanda, 2024) further emphasises the role of WPL in addressing youth unemployment.

By promoting apprenticeships and internships, the strategy seeks to improve the employability of young people by providing them with real-world experience and exposure to various sectors of the economy. The Rwandan government's commitment WPL and skill development is further demonstrated in the Priority Skills for Growth and Youth Empowerment program for Rwanda (PSGYE) (World Bank, 2024a), which aims to improve employability for target beneficiaries and strengthen institutional capacity for enhanced service delivery in skills development. More specifically, PSGYE seeks to: (a) increase opportunities for the acquisition of market-demanded skills by vulnerable and NEET youths; (b) improve the quality and market-relevance of TVET and degree programs for the workforce; and (c) strengthen governance of the overall skills development system.

1.1.1 Labour Market Situation Analysis

The current status of Rwanda's labour market could be described according to three factors, namely labour force participation, employment, Labour Force Participation, sectoral Employment distribution, and unemployment and labour underutilization. The recent Quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted by National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR, 2024b) highlighted significant trends and developments in the country's labour market. LFS provides vital data for understanding employment, unemployment, and labour force participation dynamics. The working age population is those persons aged 16 years and above. The working age population is 7,873,326, with a labour force participation rate (LFPR) of 54.5% (4,293,305). It implies that just over half the population is in the labour force (including employed and unemployed persons). Of the labour force, 83.5% (3,585,651 people) are employed, and 16.5% (707,654 people) are unemployed. The employed comprises 1,882,466 agricultural workers (excluding subsistence), industry 523,505, and services 1,179,680. Most employees are agricultural workers.

Women, rural population, youth and mature middle aged are more likely to be out of the labour force. Women are more likely to be out of the labour market than men, the rural population is substantially more likely to be out of employment than the urban population, due to a higher likelihood of participation in subsistence agriculture, and limited job opportunities. Finally, the youth and the mature middle age, having received limited education, are also less likely to be integrated into the labour force.

The future of work will be increasingly digital, automated and distributed. Globally the nature of work is changing, and few detailed predictions are likely to be accurate to 2035, even less 2050. The current wave of technological change based on advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI) and automation has created widespread fear of job losses and further rises in inequality¹. However, it is important to note that it can also create opportunity. Adoption and usage of digital technologies raises the productivity of capital and labour and can enable participation in global value chains. Furthermore, many jobs are already digital, or digitally enabled. In other regional markets, the proportion of digital or digitally-enabled entry level jobs can range from 6% (agriculture) to 79% (finance and insurance). The future of Rwanda's growth will be strongly influenced by the skills available for productive use. The National Strategy for Transformation puts it thus:

"The main contributing factor to real GDP growth will be growth in labour inputs: **quantity improvements** through a growing labour force; and **quality improvements** through increasing the human capital and productivity of workers".

¹ NISR (2021) Labour force Survey annual report 2021. Kigali, Rwanda: NISR.

¹ ILO, "The economics of artificial intelligence: Implications for the future of work" 2018

¹ Republic of Rwanda (2021) Country strategy paper 2022-2026. October. African Development Bank.

Labour force participation

Rwanda's labour force participation has been marked by a steady increase since at least the past three years. As of November 2024, Rwanda's working-age population was around 8.4 million. Out of these, around 4.6 (54.7%) million were employed, 789 (9.3%) thousand were unemployed, and 3 million (35.7%) were outside the labour force. The labour force comprised 5.4 million people, including both the employed and unemployed population. The overall labour force participation rate has increased consistently over the past three years, rising from 58.7% in November 2022 to 60% in November 2023 and rising again to 64% in November 2024. At the same time, the rate of the population outside the labour force decreased from 40% in November 2023 to 36% in November 2024. This decrease and the steady consistency increase in the labour force participation highlight a steady rise in the number of individuals engaging in economic activities. Interestingly, there remains a notable gender disparity in labour force participation. The participation rate for men was 71.9%, significantly higher than the 57.1% reported for women, indicating a gender gap of 14.8%. Meanwhile, the rates for both genders have shown improvement over the past year.

Employment

Rwanda's employment-to-population ratio (EPR) has been steadily increasing over the past five years as indicated by the recent labour force survey (NISR, 2024b). EPR increased from 49.9% in November 2023 to 54.6% in November 2024. This increase was substantial for both males (5.1%) and females (4.4%). The employment rate was, however, higher among males (63.1 %) than females (47.1 %). Furthermore, adults aged 31 and above had a higher EPR (58.4%) than youth aged 16-30 (49.9%). The gender gap in EPR was 16% in November 2024 compared to 15.3% in November 2023, highlighting persistent challenges in achieving gender parity in the labour market.

Despite impressively rapid growth in the two decades, some of the challenges facing Rwanda's labour market include the prevalence informal employment and low wage work, especially amongst women (ILO, 2023). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023), Rwanda's labour market is still dominated by informal employment, with almost 85% of Rwandan workers being informally employed, including over 83% and per 86% of male and female workers, respectively.

Sectoral employment distribution

Rwanda's labour market is marked by a growing shift in sectoral employment distribution. Traditionally, agriculture was the dominant employment sector, with more than 80% of Rwandans involved in some forms of farming (World Bank & Government of Rwanda, 2020). With the steady growth of industrial and service sectors over the past few years, the share of the agricultural sector has declined. According to the latest national labour force survey (NISR, 2024b), for example, it decreased from 46.9% in November 2020 to 41.1% in November 2024 (NISR, 2024b) declining from 46.2% in November 2023. Conversely, the industry sector's share of employment increased from 14.3 % in November 2023 (Q4) to 16.3 % in November 2024 (Q4) while that of the service sector increased from 39.4 % in November 2023 (Q4) to 42.6 % in November 2024, indicating a gradual transformation of the Rwandan economy towards more industry- and service-oriented activities.

Relatively high rates of unemployment and labour underutilization are still important unmet needs for employment challenging labour market in Rwanda. According to the latest Labour Force Survey, Quarter 4 by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR, 2024b), the overall unemployment rate in November 2024 was 14.7%, showing a 2.1% from 2023. The unemployment rate was higher among females (17.5%) than males (12.2%) and higher among the youth (18%) than adults (12.3%). The gender gap in unemployment rate slightly declined by 0.9 percentage points comparing to the same quarter of 2023. The unemployment rate was more prevalent in rural areas (15.2 %) than in urban areas (13.6 %). It worth noting that these unemployment rates do not include subsistence agriculture as, due to a recent methodological change, NISR does not count it as a type of employment (RDB, 2019). Another set of unmet employment needs include labour underutilization, which includes time-related underemployment, and potential labour force. In November 2024 (Q4), the labour underutilization rate stood at 55.0 % and was higher among females (62.0 %) than males (47.8 %) and higher among youth (56.6 %) than adults (53.8 %).

1.1.2. Skills Supply and Demand

While the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) aimed to increase the proportion of students enrolled in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) from 31.1% in 2017 to 60% by 2024, it also emphasized the need for TVET programs to be aligned with labour market demands. Currently, TVET has image and reputational challenges among the youth. There is a need to improve teaching and assessment quality, develop teachers, invest in machinery and equipment upgrades, and develop demand-driven programmes. The lack of private sector involvement in TVET is an obstacle to quality provision. Engagement still poses an obstacle for TVET and Higher Education institutions to provide market-relevant skills. Insufficient private sector engagement in TVET and Higher Education is reflected in inadequate framework of curriculum design, limited work exposure of students, and missing feedback loops in curriculum development.

The National HRD Strategy (2018) revealed that employers lack experience in working with TVET institutions. TVET and Higher Education institutions do not track their graduates' labour market outcomes, so management and resource allocation decisions are rarely based on impact. The RDB Skills Office is in the process of piloting a Graduate Tracker Survey Recently, to track graduate destinations in TVET and Higher Education. Private sector involvement in the governance of the TVET system at both high-level and for individual schools and institutions ensure that the feedback loop is established. The RDB Skills Office is setting up Sector Skills Committees to ensure that there are formal structures exist for industry participation.

Workforce upskilling in the private sector could benefit from greater accountability and fostering a nascent ecosystem of skills providers. Currently, the Capacity Building Fund (CBF), within RDB, is in charge of public and private sector skills development. The Sector Chambers are responsible for submitting their training requests. The CBF then prioritizes and funds the most relevant initiatives. Skills providers are evaluated, but not on an annual or regular basis, and their funding is not tied to performance. Going forward, RDB could increase the accountability of skills providers while promoting top performers. Some skills providers are already showing promising results in Rwanda.

Ensuring an alignment between the skills supply and labour market demand is essential for fostering sustainable economic growth, reducing unemployment, and improving the overall efficiency of labour markets (Balliester & Elsheikhi, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2020). The alignment is particularly critical in today's dynamic global economy (Lund et al., 2023). Rwanda has also made efforts to align skills development with labour market demands. The existence of a Chief Skills Office to oversee this alignment at Rwanda Development Board illustrates these efforts. Likewise, ensuring skills demand and supply balance is consistently reiterated across the main WPL policies and reports as condition for realising Rwanda's key strategic goals. There is clear commitment to ensure skill supply-demand alignment and clear efforts to achieve this balance as illustrated in various Rwanda labour-related policy documents and reports (e.g., MIFOTRA, 2019; RDB, 2019).

1.1.3 Workplace Learning Interventions

Considering the misalignment between skills supply and demand, the government of Rwanda and its local (e.g., PSF-Rwanda) and international partners (e.g., GIZ), have devised and implemented several intervention programs to close the gaps through promoting workplace learning.

In accordance with the Rwanda Workplace Learning Policy (MIFOTRA, 2015), such programs can be divided into three categories: Industry Based Training, apprenticeship training, industrial attachment or internship, and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

RAPID RESPONSE TRAINING

The intervention is implemented by Rwanda TVET Board (RTB) under Skills Development Fund (SDF). It is on-job training and, simultaneously, training for a job. Since 2015, over 4,000 have benefited from this program, of whom over 75% are employed. Companies in need of skilled workers are supported to undertake subsidized training, and after graduation, the company is committed to retain at least 70% of trainees as workers.

The following challenges were identified; (i) the small number of companies implementing the intervention due to insufficient budget and (ii) low wages for the retained workers in companies which implemented Rapid Response Training (RRT) which caused high turnover. Recognizing the critical role of RRT, there is a need to increase the budget and put more effort into incentivizing more companies and bringing them on board to partner in implementing this program.

PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP

The professional Internship is dedicated to university graduates by attaching them to public and private institutions/companies. From 2015 to 2022, a total number of 13,293 interns were placed¹. On average, 1500 graduates were placed annually. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of placed interns secure jobs after the internship period. Among others, the following challenges hinder successfulness of a professional Internship:

- Internees claim that six (6) duration of professional Internship is considered to be too short.
- Need to mainstream professional Internships into all public institutions, including decentralized entities and their projects.
- We need to incentivize private institutions and show them the importance of hosting internees.
- Program buy-in and ownership by supervisors or institutions

Recognizing the role played by professional Internships, it is essential to mainstream professional Internships among public institutions. This can be done by requesting them to host at least 10% of interns of the total number of their staff in the organization structure. It is also important to encourage private institutions by incentivizing them.

DUAL TRAINING

Dual-training program is one of the sustainable solutions where unemployed graduates from secondary education and university are targeted to equip them with technical and vocational skills in high-demand areas to ensure their smooth transition into the labour market. Implementing the pilot dual training programs showed that **78.8% of 2260 beneficiaries** were employed within six months after training.

1.1.3.1 INDUSTRIAL – BASED TRAINING (Apprenticeship)

Industry Based Training (IBT) lasts six months or above and is implemented based on the Districts' needs and potentialities. The Industry-Based Training for Job Creation aims at reinventing the opportunities necessary to create hands jobs for unemployed, unskilled youth and informal workers to meet labour market needs. In the industry-based Training programs, among 9,459 who graduated, 61.3% were employed after six months of training. We need to scale up IBT across all districts to increase employment opportunities for IBT-trained youth. Unlike attachments and internships, which primarily aim at work experience, apprenticeship training is a structured - usually pre-employment training in the real world of work. Apprenticeship training aims to build full occupational competence of apprentices. Apprenticeships are longer than attachments and internships and imply a considerable commitment to and ownership of the training by the involved employer/enterprise. Two types of apprenticeship are to be noted: (1) Traditional apprenticeship and (2) Cooperative training or dual apprenticeship. Traditional apprenticeship describes informal training relationship between a traditional master and a young person. It is less structured and does not necessarily lead to formal qualifications, although recognition of prior learning can be introduced.

1.2 School - Based Learning Interventions

1.2.1 School-Based Learning Interventions : Massive Short-Term Vocational Training

This is a short-term training aimed at providing hands-on skills to unskilled, semi-skilled Youths, women and persons with disability who are willing to learn courses related to potentialities in their respective districts. It takes a minimum of 3 months to complete MVT training, and RTB selects the trades/courses to be undertaken in collaboration with Districts. There are significant training areas under MVT: Culinary arts, tailoring, hairdressing, welding, mechanics, carpentry, and knitting. From 2014/15 to 2018/19, 17,332 beneficiaries graduated, of whom over 65% got employment after graduation. Despite its success, MVT faced a budget challenge after SIDA withdrew as the primary sponsor.

1.2.2 Reconversion Programme

The high unemployment rate among graduates is mainly due to a skills mismatch between their acquired skills and the needs of the labour market. The reconversion program equips graduates from HLLIs with technical and vocational skills relevant to the labour market, thus discouraging job seekers and unemployment. The pilot phase of the reconversion program was implemented in the fiscal years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 and attracted around **928 university graduates**, slightly higher than the overall target of 900 students. **Over 80% of beneficiaries got jobs after graduation.** They were mainly trained in trades such as culinary arts, food and beverage services, food and beverage processing services, masonry, carpentry, motor vehicle mechanics, plumbing, electronics, and telecommunications, among others. Many graduates created their businesses after training, and others secured employment opportunities. A good number of graduates started their businesses after training, and others got employment.

1.2.3 Five Year Youth Employment Programme Proposed Interventions

In a bid to address the issues of ever-increasing youth unemployment, underemployment and youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) as well as to sustain the pace of jobs creation. This Five-Year Youth Employment programme through its Labour-Intensive Interventions, Employability Skills Development and proposed Youth Employment and Investment facility have been proposed. This program is built after analysing existing business models which allow on one hand to leverage on areas where there is a possibility of market failure that need to be addressed to create more jobs and on the other hand the areas where there are potential untapped employment opportunities that once invested in can create more demand for labour.

Attachment (or industrial attachment): An attachment is a compulsory part of an education program, usually implemented in the TVET sector and in higher education. Participants are students, and the successful attachment is a prerequisite for graduation and certification. Although the learning may be structured, the main purpose of an attachment is work exposure, i.e. putting into practice what has been learnt before. An example is the Industrial Attachment Program (IAP) in the TVET sector.

Internship: An internship is like an attachment, but the difference is that internship is not part of an educational learning program. It is an own-standing work experience scheme, aimed at easing the entrance into work of a young person. Internships are also offered by companies and last between six and twelve months. The internship program is not building skills and matching talent to its fullest potential. This is reflected in a relatively low employment rate for recent interns, neighboring 60%. This is explained by five main pain points. First, internships are often not resulting in the envisaged learning effects, with interns performing clerical tasks without upgrading and developing their skills. One of the reasons for the latter is the lack of an internship culture in Rwanda, which leads to a limited understanding of both companies and interns in terms of the meaning of a successful internship.

Cooperative training or dual apprenticeship is a modern form of apprenticeship. An important learning location is a company, but the training is complemented by basic, generic and theoretical training modules delivered in a training institution over the course of a least 12 months. Usually, dual apprenticeship is governed by a formal training contract, is based on a learning plan or curriculum and aims at a formal qualification.

TVET in companies: It is a special form of workplace learning where TVET is provided in and by companies. It is also often called “industry-based training”. Usually, an enterprise has established a training unit - separate from production - as an additional commercial wing. Training may be delivered by the enterprise owner, typically in micro and small enterprises, or by extra employed staff. It is a kind of training centre within an enterprise, hence “TVET in companies”. The differences between TVET in companies and normal TVET or higher learning are the vicinity of learning to the workplace, the fact that often learners may also be involved in productive activities and that the trainers are often experienced industry-practitioners.

Reports and studies have established the effectiveness, albeit limited, of such programs. Youth training centers is an example of rolled out since 2003 to provide education and training and provide entrepreneurship skills and support, increasing employment opportunities, and centering an equitable approach while working with the youth capacity. By 2023 the initiative had benefited 222 MSMEs through business development services (Digital Opportunity Trust Rwanda, 2023). Akazi Kanoze (AK2) is another program introduced in 2009 to improve youth access to employment opportunities through youth skills training, access to capital, linkages to employment, hands-on training and supportive services. By 2021, the AK2 project (as cited in Muhanguzi, 2024) had equipped high school and TVET students with market-relevant and transferable skills and implemented school-to-work transition through work-based learning in 150 schools in Kigali and Southern Province (USAID Rwanda, 2022). At the same time however, the programs’ effectiveness is hindered by the lack of coordination of WPL programs and limited involvement of the private sector in the designing the programs among other factors (MIFOTRA, 2021). The Rwanda Development Board (RDB, 2019) reported the ineffectiveness of its internship program for building skills and matching talent to its fullest potential a reflected in relatively low employment rate for recent intern (about 60%).

This is explained by five main pain points. First, internships are often not resulting in the envisaged learning effects, with interns performing clerical tasks without upgrading and in a more recently study, Muhanguzi (2024) found that prominent barriers to effective implementation of youth WPL programs in Rwanda included skills mismatch in the labour market; poor coordination with other running programs; inability to integrate education and training into decent youth employment, failure to match labour laws with youth welfare, cultural biases limiting young women from participating in the labour market, funding gaps, limited youth engagement during program design, and lack of youth awareness about existing employment programs. The rollout of the above-mentioned WPL programs demonstrated Rwanda’s commitment and significant foundation for upskilling its present and future workforce through education on the one hand. On the other hand, the analysis made points to the need for increased attention on the design and implementation of the programs so that they do match well with the country’s development goals and the required skill levels its workforce demands.

1.2 Analysis of Policy framework on Work Place Learning

Rationale of the assessment

Efforts to strengthen workplace learning (WPL) in Rwanda are closely aligned with the national objective of bridging the gap between education and labor market needs. However, a persistent mismatch between graduate skills and industry demands particularly in high-growth sectors continues to challenge youth employment. While workplace-based training approaches such as internships and apprenticeships are recognized as vital tools for improving employability, their implementation remains limited due to inadequate institutional capacity, insufficient placement opportunities, lack of formal certification, and weak regulatory frameworks.

In response, the Government of Rwanda introduced the Workplace Learning Policy to establish structured, industry-driven systems aligned with the Rwandan National Qualifications Framework. Despite these efforts, a comprehensive evaluation of the policy's effectiveness has not yet been conducted. Recognizing this gap, AJPRODHO initiated a study to assess the policy's performance, identify shortcomings, and propose strategic improvements to enhance its impact on youth employment and skills development.

1.3 Objectives of the assessment

1.3.1 Overall objective

The overall objective of this assignment was to carry out an assessment of Rwanda's Workplace Learning Public Policy performance. To deliver on the full picture, the assessment focused on 3 levels:

- **The policy level:** to understand the gaps and challenges in policy provisions and guidelines
- **The stakeholder's level:** to understand the stakeholders' needs and expectations and their roles in the implementation process.
- **The implementation level:** focusing on the actual effects of policy implementation on the population including the students, higher learning institutions, TVET schools in urban and rural settings.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The assessment of Rwanda's Workplace Learning Public Policy aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To assess how effectively the Workplace Learning Policy has been implemented by stakeholders.
- To identify gaps and challenges in the existing coordination mechanisms among stakeholders involved in implementing the guidelines and monitoring and evaluation system
- To identify the causes and effects of inadequate access to Workplace Learning/Industrial Attachment for youth.
- To propose recommendations for policy reforms and structural improvements to create a more favorable environment for workplace learning in Rwanda.

1.3.3 Scope of the assessment

The study was conducted across 11 districts in Rwanda: Nyagatare, Ngoma, Musanze, Rulindo, Muhanga, Huye, Karongi, Rubavu, and the three districts of Kigali City (Kicukiro, Gasabo, and Nyarugenge). These districts were purposefully selected to ensure balanced geographical representation from all four provinces and the City of Kigali. This selection aimed to capture the diversity of socio-economic contexts, labor market characteristics, and institutional capacities that shape the availability and accessibility of workplace learning opportunities across the country. From a scientific standpoint, the inclusion of both urban and rural districts allows for a comparative analysis of how contextual factors such as infrastructure, employer presence, educational institutions, and economic activities affect the implementation and effectiveness of workplace learning. For instance, districts like Gasabo and Kicukiro provide insights into workplace learning in high-density urban settings with a relatively strong presence of private sector actors and formal employment, while districts such as Nyagatare, Ngoma, and Karongi offer valuable perspectives on rural challenges, such as limited employer engagement, transport barriers, and fewer structured work-based learning programs. Moreover, the selected districts reflect varying levels of economic development, industrial activity, and youth employment dynamics, all of which are key variables in assessing the availability of WPL opportunities and the degree to which different groups particularly women, youth, and persons with disabilities can access them equitably. This diversity enhances the robustness of the findings and allows for context-specific policy recommendations. Importantly, this research builds upon and complements the 2023 study on workplace learning, which was conducted in a separate set of districts. The current study was designed to close identified data gaps and provide a more comprehensive, nationally representative picture of workplace learning implementation on the ground. By expanding the geographic scope and deepening contextual understanding, this research contributes to a more holistic and evidence-based framework for informing the scale-up and equity of workplace learning initiatives in Rwanda.

The assessment focused on several key tasks aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of workplace learning policies in Rwanda. First, it involved a thorough review of existing policies, frameworks, and strategies related to workplace learning to understand their alignment with national skills development goals. Additionally, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to identify key actors involved in workplace learning, including government agencies, private sector representatives, youth organizations, and educational institutions. This helped in mapping out the roles and contributions of different entities in promoting workplace learning.

Furthermore, the study assessed the effectiveness of existing workplace learning policies, identifying challenges and gaps in their implementation. To ensure a participatory approach, data collection methods such as focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys were used to gather insights from youth, employers, and other relevant stakeholders. These interactions provided valuable perspectives on the accessibility, relevance, and impact of workplace learning programs. Lastly, the study aimed to benchmark Rwanda's workplace learning policies against best practices in similar contexts and develop actionable policy reform recommendations aimed at improving the workplace.

Section 2:

Methodology of assessment

This section describes the methodology used to assess Rwanda's implementation of the Workplace Learning Policy. It explains the methodological approach adopted in the assessment and data processing and analysis. Additionally, it highlights the measures taken to ensure data credibility, validity, and reliability, along with the quality control mechanisms implemented. It also encompasses ethical considerations highlighting the principles adhered to in order to maintain integrity and protect the rights of participants. Lastly, the section identifies some limitations encountered during the assessment.

2.1 Methodological Approach

To ensure methodological rigor and enhance the reliability of findings through triangulation, as suggested by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018), the study adopted a mixed methods approach. This approach involved the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, allowing for a more comprehensive assessment.

Qualitative sample and methods of data collection

The assessment involved the collection of both secondary and primary qualitative data. Qualitative data was collected through a desk review and key informant interviews, providing in-depth insights in addition to quantitative data.

Sample and sampling methods

Primary qualitative data was gathered from 11 districts purposively sampled participants, including 62 youth who had benefited from workplace learning opportunities and 38 key informants at both the district and national levels. In each district, 7 youth were purposively selected for in-depth interviews to capture their personal experiences, challenges, and perspectives on the workplace learning policy implementation. The table below provides detail of the distribution of the sampled key informants at national and district level.

Table 1: Distribution of sampled key informants at National and district level

Main category of key informants	Type of key Informants	No. Respondents
National level key informants	MIFOTRA officials	2
	Rwanda TVET Board (RTB)	3
	Akazi Kanoze Access	1
	CESTRAR	1
	Rwanda Youth Organization Forum	1
	Youth Network in Agribusiness	1
District level key informants	Directors BDE	8
	NCPD Coordinators	3
	PSF	5
	SMEs	3
	CBOs	4
	NYC Coordinators	4
	TVET Head teachers	3
	YEGO Center Coordinators	3
Total		42

2.1.1 Qualitative methods of data collection

Desk Review: The desk review was conducted to gather relevant information on the background and context of the study. It involved analyzing key documents, reports, and policies. Specifically, the review focused on four main areas: the Labour Market Situation Analysis, which provided insights into employment trends, job market demands, and skill gaps; Skills Supply and Demand, which examined the alignment between educational outcomes and industry needs to identify potential mismatches; Workplace Learning Interventions, which explored various strategies to assess their effectiveness in preparing students for the workforce; and the Analysis of Policy Framework on Workplace Learning, which evaluated existing national policies governing workplace learning. The findings from this review helped establish a strong foundation for the study, ensuring that it is informed by existing knowledge.

Key Informants Interviews: Individual interviews were conducted with key informants at both the national and district levels, including youth who had directly benefited from workplace learning opportunities. These interviews provided valuable insights into the implementation of workplace learning policies, including among others, challenges, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and coordination among different stakeholders. The informants included officials from the Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA), the Rwanda TVET Board (RTB), MIFOTRA. Additionally, representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), such as Akazi Kanoze Access, CESTRAR, Rwanda Youth Organization Forum and Youth Engagement in Agriculture Network (YEAN) were interviewed.

The Rwanda TVET Board, and Coordinators of Youth Friendly Centers, National Youth Councils Coordinators, National Council of People with Disabilities at the district level also participated, offering insights into the effectiveness of workplace learning initiatives from an institutional standpoint. Their contributions highlighted the extent of collaboration among stakeholders, as well as gaps in policy implementation. The discussions further examined how monitoring and evaluation frameworks had been implemented to enhance accountability and track the impact of workplace learning programs.

2.1.2 Quantitative sample and methods of data collection

The quantitative approach was employed to gather numerical data and measurable indicators related to the performance and effectiveness of the Workplace Learning (WPL) Policy in Rwanda. This method allowed for the collection of standardized responses from a large sample, enabling statistical analysis and the identification of trends, patterns, and generalizations relevant to the study objectives. To guide the data collection process, a structured questionnaire was developed, ensuring alignment with the specific research objectives and key variables under investigation. The questionnaire focused on various aspects of workplace learning, including accessibility, relevance, supervision, certification, and alignment with labor market needs.

To ensure the reliability and representativeness of the sample, the consultants used the Raosoft sample size calculator software. This tool is widely recognized for its effectiveness in determining sample size based on specified parameters such as the desired margin of error, confidence level, population size, and response distribution. By applying the Raosoft sample size formula, the consultants were able to determine an adequate and statistically significant number of respondents to ensure the findings reflect broader realities within the implementation of the WPL policy. The calculated sample size thus provided a solid foundation for collecting reliable quantitative data that could support robust conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2}}{1 + \left(\frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2 N} \right)}$$

Where,

n stands for *sample size*;

e stands for *margin of error*;

N stands for *Population*;

z stands for *z-score*

p stands for *sample proportion (or response distribution)*;

Given:

- The confidence interval of **90%** and the margin of error of **8%**,
- The sample proportion of **50%**,
- The population of **22,628**
- The z-score of **1.960**;

Then, the sample size is: 446

A statistically representative sample size of **446** companies was determined for the study, utilizing Yamane's (1967) formula for known populations, which ensures precision and validity when working with finite populations. The sample included companies across key sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and hospitality three industries with high potential for providing workplace learning opportunities and which are central to Rwanda's economic development agenda. These sectors were purposefully selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Workplace Learning Policy is being implemented across different types of enterprises.

The companies were drawn from 11 districts that were strategically selected by AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA based on their economic activity, concentration of businesses, and potential to offer workplace learning placements. In order to ensure the sample was reflective of the actual distribution of businesses across these districts, a proportional sampling approach was employed. This meant that the number of companies selected from each district was proportionate to the total number of registered businesses operating within that district. This method not only enhanced the representativeness of the data but also allowed for the collection of insights that are geographically balanced. Through this approach, the study was able to capture variations in WPL implementation and challenges across different regions and industries in Rwanda, contributing to a more nuanced and evidence-based evaluation of the policy's performance.

Quantitative data collection method(s): The questionnaire focused on key aspects such as the effectiveness of workplace learning, employer perspectives on skills development, and employment outcomes. To obtain diverse insights, the questionnaire was administered to employers from different companies across various sectors, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of workplace learning experiences and its impact on the labor market. The quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaire developed on the basis of the study objectives. The questionnaire was administered employers from different companies.

2.2 Data processing and analysis

To ensure uniformity in data entry, a template was developed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Before data entry, filled questionnaires were reviewed for response consistency and proper coding to maintain data quality. After this process, the data was entered using the pre-developed SPSS template.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Qualitative data analysis process involved examining preliminary data to identify potential themes and sub-themes from the open-ended responses. Responses that were almost the same were identified, grouped together and the most frequent ideas were considered analyzed.

Quantitative Data Analysis: After data collection, questionnaires were coded to facilitate data entry, processing, and analysis. Key decisions at this stage included handling incomplete survey forms, addressing any missing data, and conducting reality checks to identify errors in coding or data entry. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data, providing insights that informed the report.

2.3 Data Credibility, Validity and Reliability

Ensuring the credibility, validity, and reliability of the data was a critical aspect of the study. The study adopted various measures to uphold these standards throughout data collection process and analysis. As Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2018), contend, validity refers to the extent to which the data collection tools captured the intended information. To ensure data validity, the study employed multiple strategies, including methodological triangulation, where both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used to complement each other. Furthermore, the data collection tools, including interview guides and questionnaires, were reviewed by AJPRODHO officials, who provided valuable input to ensure they captured data aligned with the study objectives. Additionally, the pre-testing of tools helped refine the wording, structure, and clarity of the questions. Questions were revised based on feedback from the pre-testing, ensuring that they were straightforward and could be understood by respondents.

To ensure data reliability, the data collection process was structured and systematic. Enumerators were thoroughly debriefed before data collection commenced to ensure uniformity in administering questionnaires and conducting interviews. This minimized potential biases that could arise from differences in data collection approaches among enumerators. During key informant interviews, detailed notes were taken and later cross-checked for consistency across different respondents. Any discrepancies were addressed by reviewing the information. Additionally, responses were systematically coded to ensure accuracy and minimize errors during analysis. These measures helped enhance the reliability of the data by ensuring consistency, reducing errors, and maintaining the credibility of the data collected.

2.4 Assurance of data quality control

The researcher prioritized ensuring the trustworthiness and reliability of data collection, organization, and analysis, as well as the overall processes and outcomes of the survey. To achieve this, several measures were implemented to uphold data quality, including the following: Firstly, particular attention was given to the measurement instruments, such as schedules and checklists, to guarantee their validity and reliability. Feedback from participants during the validation of the inception report was instrumental in refining the sample size and adjusting the schedule to enhance accuracy.

Secondly, technical guidance from AJPRODHO technical team was sought and incorporated throughout the entire process, further contributing to the reliability and quality of the data. Their expertise and experience in terms of human rights were vital in operationalizing concepts, fine-tuning the research methodology and data collection tools, as well as in data analysis. Thirdly, as previously noted, the integration of technology through digitized data collection methods enhanced data quality control by minimizing errors and ensuring accuracy.

Fourthly, the use of Kinyarwanda, the native language, during data collection ensured clarity and comprehension, enabling participants and facilitators to engage effectively with the questions. Lastly, data quality and reliability were strengthened through triangulation. This involved gathering data from diverse sources and employing multiple techniques, including Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), direct observation, and key informant interviews, to provide a well-rounded and robust set of findings.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is important in ensuring that no harm can befall participants as a result of their involvement in the study. To uphold ethical standards, the study adhered to key ethical principles, including informed consent, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality among others. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, enabling them to make a conscious and deliberate decision regarding their participation. This was in line with the principle of voluntary participation, ensuring that Participants took part in the study willingly and without coercion. Moreover, to protect participants' privacy, the enumerators were mindful of the human participant principle of respect for people, as emphasized in research ethics literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Similarly, confidentiality was strictly maintained by ensuring that all data collected remained secure and was only used for research purposes. Participants were assured that their names would not be mentioned in the findings, thereby preserving their anonymity and preventing any potential risks associated with disclosure.

Section 3 : Findings of the assessment

This section presents findings from the assessment, covering various aspects, including the demographic profiles of respondents, an analysis of employers' awareness of the Workplace Learning Policy and the extent of stakeholder collaboration in its implementation. The section further explores the coordination between training institutions and workplaces in facilitating work placements, along with identified gaps in collaboration and coordination mechanisms. Moreover, it examines the criteria used for intern recruitment and explains the causes and effects of inadequate access to workplace learning opportunities for youth. The section also highlights issues related to guidance, supervision, and support during workplace learning, as well as perceptions of youth regarding accessibility to these opportunities. Furthermore, it provides a SWOT analysis of career orientation and guidance programs in Rwanda's public and private institutions. Lastly, the section describes the perceived effectiveness of school-based learning in skill development, the impact of workplace learning programs, existing challenges and incentives in work-based learning.

3.1 Demographic profiles of respondents

This sub-section presents the key demographic characteristics of respondents who participated in the assessment. It highlights the gender distribution of respondents in the sampled companies, as well as their distribution across the 11 districts where the assessment was conducted. Additionally, it examines the types and sizes of the companies sampled. By analyzing these demographic aspects, the assessment provides insights into the composition of respondents and the organizational contexts.

Figure 1: Gender of respondents

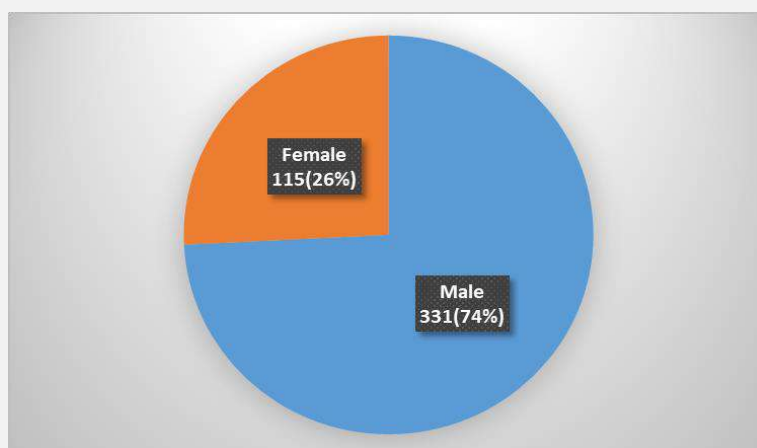
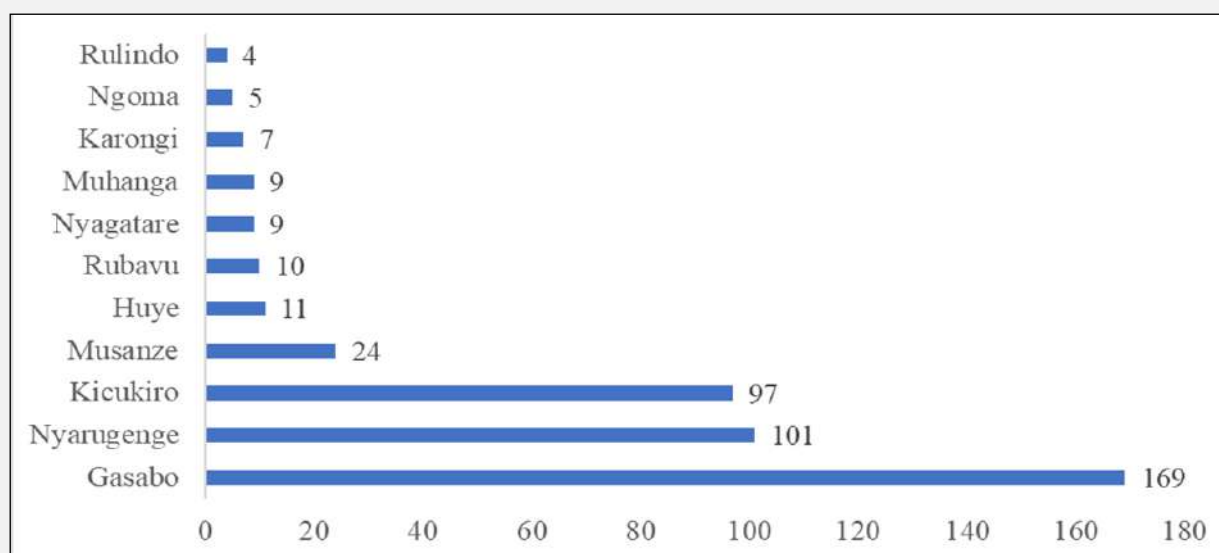


Figure 1 shows that 74% of respondents were male, while females constituted slightly more than a quarter (26%). since the target respondents were human resource managers or directors, this gender disparity suggests that men predominantly hold leadership positions in the sampled companies. this imbalance may have implications for workplace decision-making, particularly in policies related to diversity, inclusion, and skills development.

Although Rwanda has demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting workplace learning (WPL) through several policies and strategies, the findings reveal gaps in awareness among employers regarding WPL implementation guidelines. in fact, government has established key frameworks such as the workplace learning policy (MIFOTRA, 2015), vision 2050 (MINECOFIN, 2020b), national strategy for transformation (NST-1 and NST-2) (MINECOFIN, 2020a, 2023), higher education policy, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) policy, revised national employment policy (MIFOTRA,

2019), revised national gender policy, entrepreneurship development policy, national skills development and employment promotion strategy (NSDEPS) (RDB, 2019), and the private sector development & youth employment strategy (MIFOTRA, 2021). these policies emphasize capacity building, the promotion of marketable skills among the youth, and tackling unemployment. Despite these strategic efforts, the study findings indicate that many employers were not adequately informed about the WPL implementation guidelines. This lack of awareness can hinder the successful execution of workplace learning initiatives.

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by district



As depicted in Figure 2, the majority of respondents (268 out of 446) were from the City of Kigali (Kicukiro, Gasabo, and Nyarugenge), followed by secondary cities such as Musanze, Huye, Rubavu, Nyagatare, and Muhanga, where the number of respondents ranged between 9 and 24. In other districts, the number of respondents was relatively lower, ranging between 4 and 9. This variation in respondent distribution is attributed to the proportional sampling method used, where more respondents were drawn from areas with a higher concentration of companies. The Kigali city had the largest number of companies, followed by secondary cities. The urban concentration of companies has significant implications for youth in rural areas, as they may face challenges in accessing workplace learning opportunities, thereby limiting their exposure to industry-relevant skills and reducing their employability prospects.

Table 2: Types and sizes of companies involved in the assessment

Number of employees	Construction	Manufacturing	Hospitality	Total
	Number of companies	Number of companies	Number of companies	Number & percentage companies
Less than 10 employees	54	11	34	99 (22.2%)
10-30 employees	55	69	76	200 (44.8%)
31-50 employees	28	51	15	94(21.1%)
51-70 employees	10	9	8	27(6.1%)
71-90 employees	9	8	3	20 (4.5%)
91-110 employees	2	3	1	6(1.3%)
Total	158	151	137	446

The findings in Table 2 indicate that a significant proportion of the sampled companies are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Specifically, 99 out of 446 companies, including those in the construction, manufacturing, and hospitality sectors, reported having fewer than 10 employees, while 200 companies had between 10 and 30 employees. Additionally, 94 companies had 31-50 employees, and only 53 companies had more than 50 employees. This distribution suggests that the majority of the sampled companies (67%) operate on a relatively small scale, with limited with limited human resource capacity.

The predominance of SMEs has direct implications for workplace learning and youth employability. Smaller companies lack capacity to accommodate a large number of youths seeking workplace learning opportunities, particularly in industries requiring specialized skills. Moreover, the small number of large enterprises (26 companies with more than 70 employees) suggests that workplace learning opportunities in these firms are likely to be highly competitive. This limit access for many young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3.2. Recruitment of interns and duration of WPL in companies

The process and criteria companies use to select interns for workplace learning (WPL) as well as the specific period companies permit interns to participate in workplace learning were assessed. Concerning recruitment, it was revealed that for formal medium size companies require interns to apply formally and even provide proof of their academic qualification before being considered. This limits opportunities for youth who lack academic credentials but are eager to gain experience. However, others, especially smaller informal companies and the Integrated Craft Production Centers (Udukiro), were said to have an open approach, accepting interns without strict academic prerequisites. The inconsistency in recruitment processes also creates uncertainty for applicants, making it difficult for youth to understand what is required when seeking WPL opportunities.

Some beneficiaries of Workplace Learning (WPL) reported that in certain companies, individuals responsible for recruitment demand money from interns in exchange for placement opportunities. This unethical practice creates a financial barrier for some youth, particularly those from low-income families. This undermines the integrity of the WPL system, as placements may not always be based on merit or skills but rather on financial ability. Additionally, such practices discourage youth who cannot afford these informal fees, leading to frustration and reduced motivation to seek internships. These findings highlight the need for a more harmonized and inclusive approach to intern recruitment, ensuring that both youth with and without academical credentials have fair access to workplace learning opportunities. Regarding duration of workplace learning the duration for WPL in companies, there were variations depending on the type of companies and Table 3 provides detail.

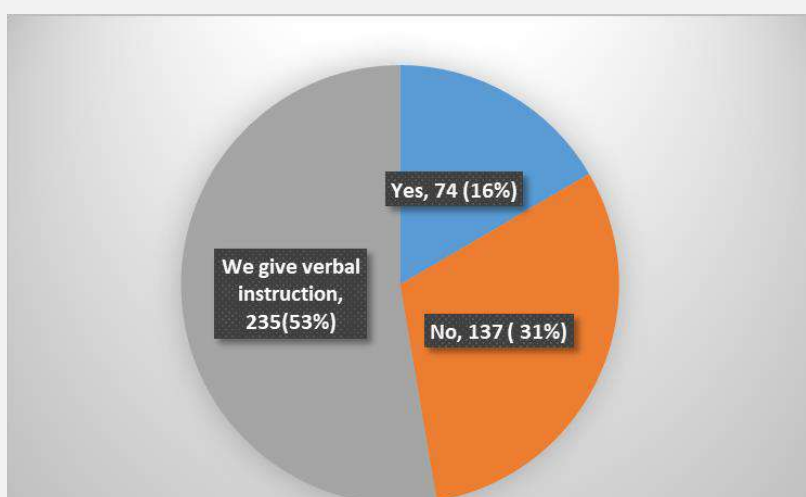
Table 3: Duration of WPL in companies

Duration of WPL	Construction	Manufacturing	Hospitality	Total
Less than 3 months	61(13.68%)	59(13.23%)	84(18.83%)	204(45.74%)
3-6 months	73(16.37%)	70(15.70%)	38(8.52%)	181(40.68%)
7-12 months	23(5.16%)	15(3.36%)	13(2.91%)	51(11.43%)
Above 12 months	1(0.22%)	7(1.57%)	2(0.45%)	10(2.24%)
Total	158(35.43%)	151(33.86%)	137(30.71%)	446(100%)

As shown in Table 3, the majority of the respondents in the companies sampled (45.74%) reported that their companies offer WPL opportunities that last less than three months, while 40.68% indicated a duration of 3 to 6 months. A smaller proportion (11.43%) said that internship in their companies lasts between 7 to 12 months, and only 2.24% of companies indicated that they allow beyond one year. However, further inquiry revealed that when the internship extends beyond three months, companies often begin providing stipends or wages to interns. This payment, though generally low, serves as an incentive for interns to continue as they provide cheap labour. It was noted that interns, particularly those struggling to secure permanent jobs, willingly accept longer internships, even when the compensation is minimal. In some cases, this results in exploitation, where companies benefit from cheap labor while interns remain in an uncertain employment status without guarantees of formal job placement.

This finding highlights a gap in workplace learning accessibility, as financial constraints force many youths to accept prolonged internship with inadequate pay instead of transitioning into stable employment. It also raises concerns about fair labor practices, emphasizing the need for stronger policies to regulate WPL duration, ensure fair compensation, and create clearer pathways from internship to full-time employment. Besides recruitment criteria and duration of WPL in companies, employers in the companies sampled were asked whether their companies had written policy for guiding workplace learning or internship/Industrial attachment. Figure 3 presents detail.

Figure 3: Existence of Written Policies for Workplace Learning



As depicted in Figure 3, a significant proportion of the respondents (53%) indicated that their companies rely on verbal instructions rather than having formal written policies to guide workplace learning. Only 16% of the respondents confirmed the existence of written policies, while 31% admitted that they had no structured guidelines in place. This indicates a lack of standardized procedures in many organizations, which could lead to inconsistencies in the implementation of workplace learning programs.

The absence of written policies or the reliance on verbal instructions may create challenges in ensuring clarity on expectations, rights, and responsibilities for both interns and employers. Without documented guidelines, workplace learning experiences may vary significantly across companies, potentially leading to cases of exploitation, unclear assessment criteria, and limited accountability. From an accessibility standpoint, the lack of written policies could disadvantage youth seeking workplace learning opportunities, especially those unfamiliar with workplace norms and expectations. It may also contribute to inequality, as opportunities may depend on informal arrangements rather than transparent and structured recruitment processes.

3.3. Workplace learning policy awareness among employers in companies

The opinions of employers in the sampled companies and key informants were gathered through questionnaires and interviews. The inquiry focused on whether companies had sufficient information about the workplace learning policy implementation guidelines and whether employees in the sampled companies had received any official training on workplace learning policy implementation.

Figure 4: Responses on whether employers in the sampled companies were aware of workplace learning implementation guidelines

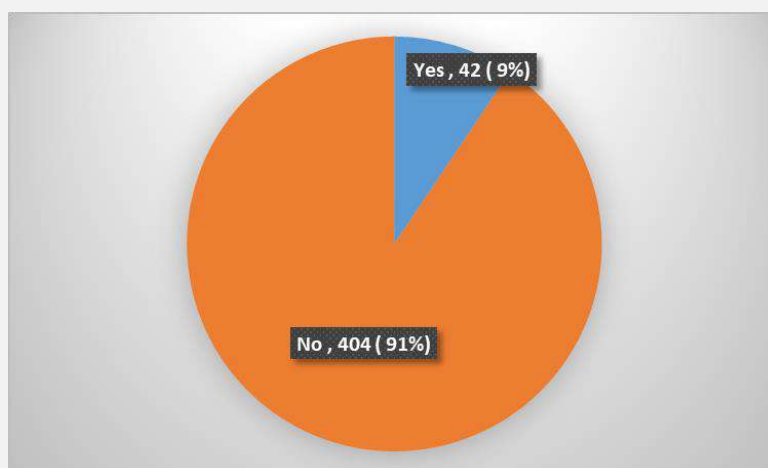


Figure 3 shows that a large proportion of the respondents pointed out that they were not aware of workplace learning implementation guidelines, while 95 responded in the affirmative. Although Rwanda has demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting Workplace Learning (WPL) through several policies and strategies, the findings reveal gaps in awareness among employers regarding WPL implementation guidelines.

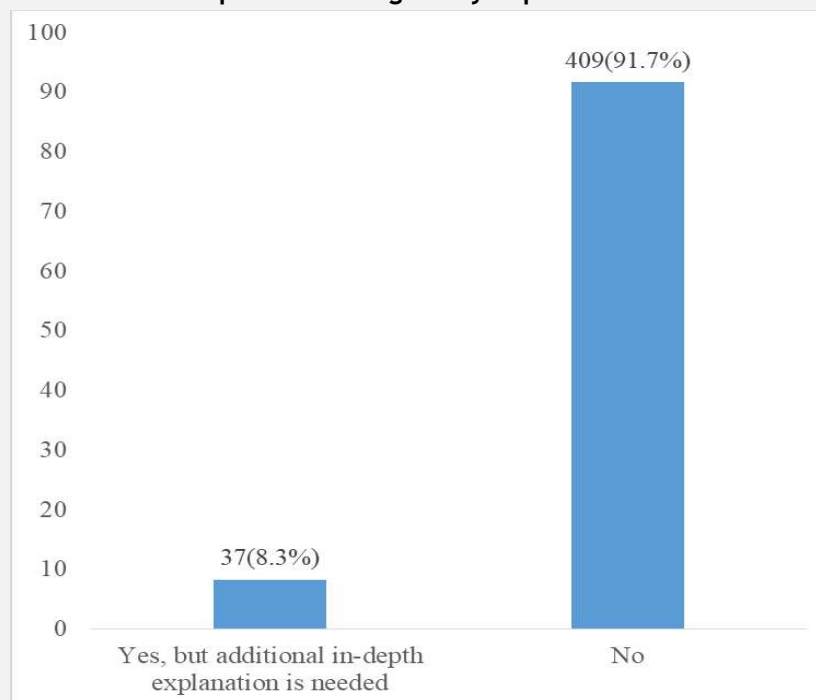
In fact, the government has established key frameworks such as the Workplace Learning Policy (MIFOTRA, 2015), Vision 2050 (MINECOFIN, 2020b), National Strategy for Transformation (NST-1 and NST-2) (MINECOFIN, 2020a, 2023), Higher Education Policy, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy, Revised National Employment Policy (MIFOTRA, 2019), Revised National Gender Policy, Entrepreneurship Development Policy, National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (NSDEPS) (RDB, 2019), and the Private Sector Development & Youth Employment Strategy (MIFOTRA, 2021). These policies emphasize capacity building, the promotion of marketable skills among the youth, and tackling unemployment.

Despite these strategic efforts, the study findings indicate that many employers were not adequately informed about the WPL implementation guidelines. This lack of awareness can hinder the successful execution of workplace learning initiatives. Moreover, interviews with national-level key informants revealed that while the Workplace Learning Policy (WLP) was established a decade ago and its implementation guidelines were introduced in 2021, many employers still perceive WLP as a new concept. One key informant, said that:

“The policy spans ten years, yet many employers are still largely unaware of its implementation guidelines. This lack of awareness is partly due to the delayed establishment of the implementation guidelines, which only came into effect in 2021. Furthermore, there has been no well-structured communication strategy to ensure that public and private sector employers understand the policy. However, efforts are now underway to strengthen dissemination and engagement strategies to bridge this gap.” National level Key Informant

The delay in rolling out implementation guidelines created uncertainty, limiting the extent to which companies could integrate WPL into their workforce development strategies. Additionally, the absence of a robust communication and awareness-raising approach hindered the widespread adoption of WPL initiatives.

Figure 5: Responses on whether employees in the sampled companies received training on Workplace Learning Policy Implementation



As can be seen in the figure above, when asked whether employees in their companies received training on Workplace Learning Policy Implementation, 91.7% responded in the negative while 8.3% in the affirmative but said additional in-depth explanation was needed. These findings suggest that the vast majority of employees in the surveyed companies have not received any training on Workplace Learning Policy Implementation. The lack of training may indicate a gap in organizational efforts to effectively communicate and implement the policy, which could hinder its intended impact. Without adequate training, employees may struggle to understand their roles and responsibilities in workplace learning, leading to inconsistent or ineffective application of the policy. Additionally, the 8.3% who reported receiving training but still required further explanation highlight the possibility that existing training programs, if any, are insufficient. This underscores the need for stakeholders to collaborate and design comprehensive training and awareness programs that not only introduce employees to the policy but also provide continuous learning opportunities to ensure effective implementation.

3.4. Stakeholder collaboration in implementation of workplace learning

Interviews with key informants revealed that despite the Workplace Learning Policy being established nearly a decade ago, it remains a relatively new concept for many stakeholders. It was reported that before these guidelines were in place, there was little to no effective collaboration between training institutions, companies, and policymakers, which hindered the structured adoption of the policy. One of the main barriers to collaboration was said to be the absence of policy implementation guidelines until 2021. The lack of clear directives meant that stakeholders operated independently, with no formal framework to guide policy implementation. This resulted in unstructured collaboration and inconsistencies in how workplace learning was implemented by different stakeholders.

However, it was reported that since the introduction of policy implementation guidelines, various strategies have been established to foster collaboration among stakeholders. One key development is the integration of workplace learning into Imihigo (performance contracts) at the district level. This inclusion ensures that local government structures actively participate in promoting workplace learning initiatives, reinforcing accountability in implementation. Additionally, the Rwanda TVET Board has taken steps to strengthen partnerships with companies that provide workplace learning opportunities for young people. Some of these companies have even been accredited to issue certificates to youth who complete on-the-job training programs, enhancing the credibility of skills acquired through workplace learning. This accreditation plays a crucial role in improving employability, as it allows trainees to obtain recognized qualifications that can support their career advancement.

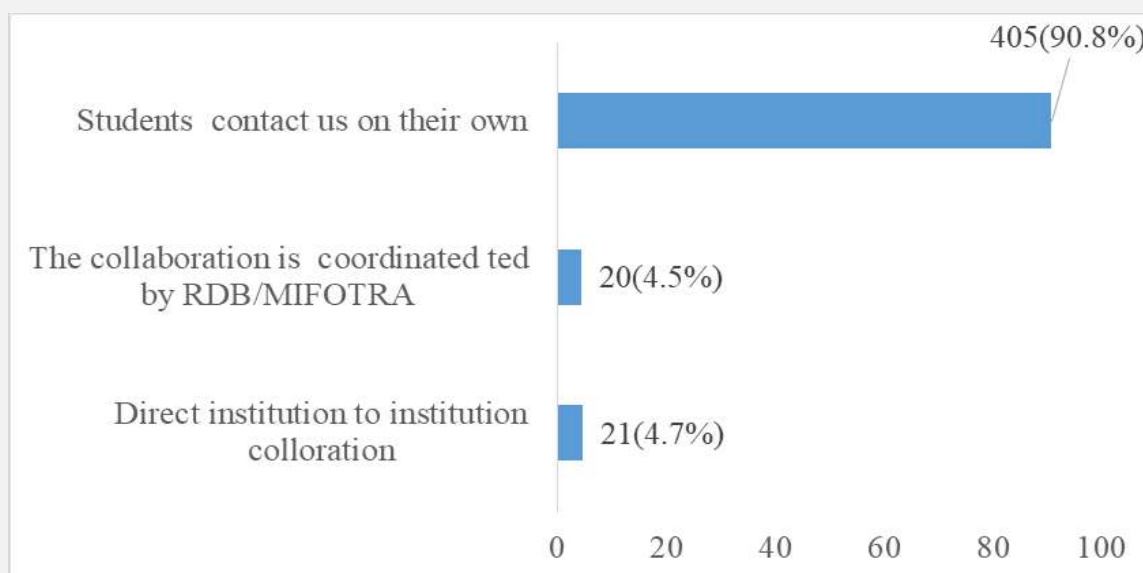
Another notable initiative cited regarding promotion of stakeholder collaboration is the district dialogues that engage the private sector in discussions about workplace learning. These dialogues serve as a platform for sharing ideas, addressing challenges, and identifying opportunities to enhance industrial attachment programs. Similarly, industrial-academia dialogues involving the Rwanda TVET Board and other key stakeholders have been established to help reduce the gap between education providers and the labor market. These engagements help ensure that the training provided aligns with industry needs, reducing skill mismatches that often hinder youth employment prospects.

Despite these positive developments, it was reported that there is still a need to further strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, particularly within the private sector. While government especially MIFOTRA have taken steps to institutionalize workplace learning by establishing professional internship program, the private sector has not fully embraced its role in the workplace learning initiative. One of the key challenges identified is the limited understanding and awareness among many private sector actors regarding the long-term benefits of structured workplace learning programs. It was reported that many companies still view internships and apprenticeships as additional costs rather than investments in workforce development. To address this, there is a need for targeted awareness campaigns and incentive structures that encourage private sector participation.

3.5. Collaboration between training institutions and workplaces for internship/industrial attachment

Effective collaboration between training institutions and workplaces is essential for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This partnership enables students gain with hands-on experience, improving their readiness for the job market. In this regard, the collaboration between companies and training institutions in relation to recruitment of interns for workplace learning was examined. The figure below provides details of the responses.

Figure 6:
Responses on Companies Collaboration with Training Institutions for Skill-Based Intern Recruitment



The findings in Figure 5 indicate that in most of the sampled companies, there is no structured collaboration between training institutions and workplaces for recruiting interns for workplace learning. A significant 90.8% of respondents reported that students independently contact companies to secure internships, while only 4.7% indicated that recruitment occurs through direct institutional partnerships, and 4.5% mentioned that the process is coordinated by MIFOTRA. This suggests that workplace learning opportunities largely depend on individual student efforts rather than a formalized system that ensures alignment between academic training and industry needs.

Although the Government of Rwanda, in collaboration with local partners such as the Private Sector Federation (PSF-Rwanda) and international organizations like GIZ, has implemented workplace learning intervention (e.g. Industry-Based Training (IBT), apprenticeship training, and industrial attachment or internship within Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to close these gaps in accordance with the Rwanda Workplace Learning Policy (MIFOTRA, 2015), there still seems to be no formalized collaboration between training institutions and workplaces.

While the interventions aim to strengthen workplace learning, the lack of systematic coordination and collaboration between training institutions and companies limits their effectiveness.

Moreover, key informants further revealed that while MIFOTRA has a professional internship program and liaises with select companies to facilitate placements, there is currently no structured framework ensuring consistent collaboration between training institutions and workplaces regarding industrial attachment or internships. It was revealed that MIFOTRA is actively advocating for ensuring that direct formal agreements (MoUs) between training institutions and companies are established, but resistance within the private sector—partly due to a limited understanding has slowed progress.

The implications of these findings are significant for youth seeking workplace learning opportunities. The absence of a structured collaboration framework limits access to internships, particularly for students who lack personal connections or industry networks. Strengthening collaboration between training institutions and workplaces through formal agreements, policy enforcement, and private-sector engagement is crucial for expanding and improving workplace learning opportunities for young people, ultimately enhancing their transition into the labor market. Studies suggest that structured collaboration between educational institutions and industries is crucial for enhancing employability and ensuring that students gain practical skills relevant to the labor market (Zwick, 2015). However, the absence of well-defined partnerships leads to inconsistencies in internship opportunities and training quality. Research by Fuller and Unwin (2017) emphasizes that successful workplace learning systems require active employer engagement and clear policy implementation to foster sustainable partnerships between businesses and educational institutions.

3.6. Gaps and Challenges in implementation of workplace learning policy

This section presents the perceptions of key informants and workplace learning providers sought regarding the gaps and challenges encountered in the implementation of workplace learning policy.

3.6.1. Gaps in Implementation of Workplace Learning Policy

Effective implementation of workplace learning policies requires a well-structured system with clear roles, coordination mechanisms, and adequate resources. However, several gaps hinder its success, including governance, funding, and collaboration deficiencies.

- **Lack of ownership of the workplace learning initiative by the PSF (Private Sector Federation):** Interviews with key informants and workplace learning providers revealed that the PSF has not taken full ownership of workplace learning initiatives, which has led to limited advocacy and support for implementation.
- **Ineffective coordination mechanisms:** Workplace learning providers reported that there is no proper coordination of the implementation of the workplace learning policy and this has resulted in fragmented efforts. It was reported that various institutions operate independently, leading to duplication of efforts and lack of synergy. These findings align with MIFOTRA (2021), which indicated that the effectiveness of workplace learning programs is hindered by poor coordination and limited involvement of the private sector in program design.
- **Limited stakeholder collaboration:** It was revealed that collaboration between government agencies, private sector actors, and educational institutions remains weak.
- **Inadequate technical capacity for monitoring and evaluation:** Key informants noted that there is a shortage of skilled personnel and resources dedicated to monitoring and evaluating workplace learning programs.
- **Absence of a systematic approach to evaluating the impact of workplace learning programs by providers:** Workplace learning providers indicated that most institutions lack standardized frameworks for assessing the outcomes of workplace learning programs. It was reported that the absence of impact assessments makes it difficult to track progress and identify areas that require improvement.
- **Weak collaboration between training institutions and companies in student placements:** Key informant in some training institutions and workplace learning providers' employers revealed that student placement opportunities are often limited due to weak partnerships. It was noted that many companies hesitate to accept students for workplace learning due to unclear expectations and resource constraints.
- **Limited funding mechanisms for skills development and workplace learning:** It was reported that financial constraints remain a major barrier to effective workplace learning implementation. Stakeholders emphasized that the current funding mechanisms are insufficient to support the expansion and sustainability of workplace learning initiatives. This finding corroborates with the study conducted by Muhanguzi (2024) which found inadequate funding as a key barrier to the effective implementation of workplace learning programs.

3.6.2. Challenges Faced in the Implementation of Workplace Learning Policy

Beyond structural gaps, some challenges that militate against effective implementation of workplace learning policy were highlighted. These include:

- **Private sector engagement is still low:** Interviews with key informants revealed that many companies do not actively participate in workplace learning initiatives. It was reported that some employers perceive workplace learning as a financial burden rather than an opportunity for skills development. A review of the literature further indicated that, beyond limited participation in implementation, private sector involvement in the design of workplace learning programs was also minimal (MIFOTRA, 2021).
- **Limited awareness among private sector actors about workplace learning initiatives and their role:** During interviews with some PSF actors, it was reported that many companies lack awareness of the workplace learning policy and how it supposed to be implemented. It was noted that this has resulted in low adoption rates.
- **Many private informal and formal companies are unaware of the Workplace Learning Policy:** Key informants stated that a significant number of companies, particularly in the informal sector, have limited knowledge of workplace learning policy.
- **Capacity of in-company instructors; not all companies have adequately trained in-company instructors, affecting workplace training effectiveness:** It was noted that companies participating in workplace learning often struggle with a shortage of trained in-company instructors, reducing the effectiveness of on-the-job training.
- **Many companies hesitate to provide long durations for workplace learning due to resource constraints:** Interviews with employers revealed that companies are often unwilling to commit to extended periods for workplace training due to operational and financial limitations.
- **Limited internship opportunities due to inadequate funding:** Workplace learning providers reported that students struggle to secure internships as companies lack the financial resources necessary to support such programs. It was further noted that in some companies, internship often fails to result in meaningful learning, with interns mainly performing clerical tasks. This finding aligns with Muhanguzi (2024), who found that a major challenge to workplace learning in Rwanda is the failure of internships to yield the expected learning outcomes.
- **Limited access to companies with workplace learning opportunities due to costs and logistical challenges:** It was revealed that high costs and logistical difficulties prevent many students especially those in rural areas, from accessing the desired workplace learning opportunities.
- **Demand for workplace learning exceeds available supply:** It was reported that the number of students seeking workplace learning opportunities surpasses the available placements, creating a significant gap between demand and supply.
- **Skills mismatch in the labor market:** Interviews with key informants revealed that many graduates struggle to find jobs due to a mismatch between the skills taught in training programs and those required by employers. This aligns with Muhanguzi (2024), who found that skills mismatches in the labor market are a significant barrier to the success of workplace learning initiatives.

Summary of Challenges and Gaps in Workplace Learning (WPL) Interventions and Key Recommendations

Based on the challenges outlined above, most were found to be either specific to particular Workplace Learning (WPL) interventions or crosscutting across multiple WPL modalities. To enhance clarity and facilitate ease of understanding for the reader, the key challenges have been summarized and categorized into five thematic areas. The table below presents a concise overview of these challenges alongside corresponding recommendations. This structured format is intended to support a quick and comprehensive grasp of the main issues identified, as well as the proposed strategies for addressing them.

#	Intervention	Challenges/ Gaps	Key recommendations
1	Industrial Attachment	Limited support provided to students in accessing industrial attachment opportunities Inadequate monitoring and supervision of industrial attachment programs Some companies require trainees to pay fees to secure industrial attachment placements Companies are often overwhelmed due	To initiate partnerships with companies/employers for industrial attachment opportunities (TVET schools& HLIs) and strengthen the existing ones; To strengthen planning and monitoring of industrial attachment to ensure its intended goals are achieved (RTB and HEC). To establish standards requirements and

		to the simultaneous placement of a large number of trainees Low adherence to the official guidelines governing the implementation of the Workplace Learning Policy in Rwanda	costing (Eg. consumables, living cost of trainees/ and monitoring cost) for industrial attachment (RTB& HLIs) ; To establish a flexible industrial attachment calendar (RTB and HLIs); To integrate the guidelines on the implementation of Workplace Policy into quality assurance processes in schools (RTB, RP, NESAs & HEC)
2	Professional Internship	Inadequate monitoring mechanisms to ensure the quality and effectiveness of internship programs. Delays in the disbursement of allowances to interns, affecting their motivation and participation. Limited awareness among companies regarding the objectives and benefits of professional internship programs. Weak coordination and communication between central government institutions and district authorities regarding intern placement and supervision. Insufficient internship duration, with many interns perceiving the allocated time as too short to gain meaningful experience.	To strengthen monitoring of internship (MIFOTRA) Improve processes of payment of allowances to interns to avoid delays To increase awareness of companies about professional internship (MIFOTRA) Establish effective coordination and communication mechanisms between central government and Districts on intern's placement and supervision Extending the professional internship from 6 months to one year
3	Apprenticeship (Dual Training)	Lack of harmonized costing relating to incentives to companies participating in dual training (those include consumables, remunerations of in company instructors, etc) Lack of established approval procedures for schools willing to start the dual training in the regular training programs Lack of accreditation system for companies and database of those who want to establish permanent IBT ¹ centers after experience with SDF ² Comprehensive assessments in TVET schools (end term exams) are completely theoretical while dual training focuses on practices The current dual training practices of 30% at school and 70% in company in pilot continuous TVET levels for some actors (Level III to level V) cause low performance of the students/trainees as they miss sufficient time to learn and master fundamental theories and basic practices at school. Limited collaboration between school	•Harmonization of the costing related to incentives to companies (RTB and HEC) •Put in place and communicate the approval procedures for schools willing to start the dual training in the regular training programs and to establish 2 model schools per Districts (RTB and NESAs); •Put in place an accreditation system for companies and database of those who want to establish permanent IBT centers to ensure sustainability of workplace learning •Establish end term comprehensive assessments that have both theory and practices to promote practical skills among students in TVET; •Establish the dual training in TVET continuous levels (from level III upward) by applying the principal of with 50% at school to cover theories and basic practices and 50% at company to enhance practices in the real world of work; •Funding intervention should involve the concerned schools when signing MoU with companies in order facilitate their smooth collaboration to implement dual training

1 **IBT**- Industry–Based Training2 **SDF**- Skills Development Fund

		and company in the implementation of dual training when the MoUs are signed by third party (Funding intervention) without involving schools. Weak institutionalization of dual training	•Institutionalizing the Dual system in regular TVET programs
4	Coordination and Management Mechanism	Limited awareness and knowledge about WPL	Enhance knowledge and information sharing events as on WPL Improve public awareness about workplace learning
5	Graduates	Limited financial capacity to initiate their own business requiring start-up capital Some graduates display a passive attitude leading to the feeling that everything will come from WPL Limited linkages to other government initiatives having in their mandate business advisory and mentorship services to ensure a thorough and regular accompaniment of graduates, especially the ones who are self-employed; Limited awareness among graduates about different alternatives of accessing finance in addition to skills provided during workplace learning; Limited exposure among graduates to relevant stakeholders, including BDF, banks and other financial institutions in addition to skills provided during workplace learning.	Join their efforts towards working together in cooperative, as a way of raising start-up capital to start their own businesses. To adopt a positive and proactive attitude towards the WPL programme, and consider it as consider it golden opportunity to capitalise on by initiating income generating activity, instead waiting for everything on a silver-plate. Develop interest among graduates about different alternatives of accessing finance, including BDF, banks and other financial institutions

Causes and effects of inadequate access to Workplace Learning opportunities for youth.

Causes of Inadequate Access to Workplace Learning Opportunities for Youth

- **Limited Availability of workplace learning providers:** It was reported that the number of workplaces learning training providers remains relatively small compared to the growing number of young people seeking opportunities. This imbalance creates a shortage of placement options, leaving many youth unable to access hands-on experience in their respective fields.
- **Financial Constraints:** The sampled youth and key informants pointed out that many youth face financial challenges that hinder their participation in workplace learning programs. Expenses such as transportation, meals, and accommodation make it difficult for many youth to access WPL opportunities, especially when located far from their homes.
- It said that many companies are unable to accommodate many interns due to financial constraints, lack of infrastructure, or a perception that training interns is an extra burden without immediate returns. This results in a highly competitive selection process, leaving many young people without placement.
- **Lack of information among youth, especially in rural areas:** The youth sampled in rural districts reported that many of their counterparts, particularly in rural areas, are unaware of available workplace learning opportunities due to poor communication. The lack of accessible platforms to share information about WPL programs means that many potential beneficiaries miss out on available opportunities.

- **Limited Financial Resources for Interns:** It was pointed out that even when WPL opportunities are available, many youth are unable to participate because they cannot afford associated costs. Those who secure placements far from home struggle with accommodation and daily expenses, forcing them to abandon the opportunity or perform poorly due to financial challenges.
- **Shortage of companies that provide WPL opportunities:** The number of companies that provide WPL opportunities is significantly lower than the number of interns seeking opportunities. With a growing demand for internships, this results in fewer available placements, making it difficult for some youth to gain practical experience.
- **Lack of Resources and Capacity in Some Companies:** Some companies lack the necessary resources, infrastructure, and personnel to effectively train interns. Additionally, concerns about investing in interns without immediate returns discourage some companies from participating.
- **Delayed Feedback from RDB:** Some participants noted that delays in responses from the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) regarding internship placements create challenges for students seeking workplace learning opportunities. This uncertainty discourages students from applying and limits timely access to placements.

Effects of inadequate access to workplace learning opportunities on youth

- **Limited Practical Experience:** It was said that the lack of workplace learning opportunities leave many youth with limited practical experience. They often struggle to adapt to the demands of real work environment due to a lack of hands-on exposure. This makes them less competitive in the job market.
- **Lower Employment Rates:** The lack of workplace learning opportunities contributes to high unemployment and underemployment rates among the youth. Employers often seek candidates with sufficient hand-on -skills leaving those without practical exposure at a disadvantage.
- It was revealed that securing workplace learning opportunities is particularly difficult for youth in fields that require highly specialized skills. It was noted that companies specializing in fields such as engineering and technology, among others, offer limited opportunities because they often prefer individuals who can work with minimal guidance rather than those who are still in the learning phase. As a result, some youth experience delays in accessing workplace learning opportunities.

Suggestions from participants on ways of increasing access to workplace learning opportunities

- Participants suggested the following strategies to increase access to workplace learning opportunities for the youth.
- It was reported that mandating private sector participation could be an effective approach. They emphasized that companies above a certain size should be required to host interns as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts or receive tax incentives to encourage their involvement.
- Strengthening public-private partnerships was also highlighted as a crucial measure, with participants suggesting that agreements should be established between the government, learning institutions, and industries to ensure a steady supply of internship placements.
- Furthermore, it was said that there is need to establish a national skills development fund to provide financial support for interns. Participants explained that many students struggle to afford transportation and other expenses associated with internships, making financial assistance necessary to reduce such barriers.
- It was also suggested that a centralized internship portal should be developed and managed by the government to list available internship opportunities and facilitate matching between students and companies.
- Participants further recommended incentivizing companies to host interns by providing subsidies, or some consumables. It noted that companies could willing to engage in workplace learning but lack the necessary resources to do so. Additionally, employer sensitization campaigns as a viable means to raise awareness among businesses about the benefits of workplace learning and their role in bridging the skills gap among young people.

- It was also suggested that workplace learning policies should be standardized to provide clear guidelines on intern rights, employer responsibilities, and evaluation criteria for quality assurance. Participants stressed that a lack of clear policies often leads to inconsistencies in how internships are implemented. Enhancing supervision and mentorship was another key recommendation, with participants calling for government or institutional supervisors to monitor internship experiences and provide necessary mentorship support to both students and employers.
- It was also recommended that NGOs and development partners should be encouraged to integrate workplace learning initiatives into their youth empowerment programs, thereby expanding opportunities for students.
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation was emphasized as an essential measure. Participants recommended setting up a regulatory body to track workplace learning programs and ensure compliance with established quality standards.
- Lastly but no means least, it was suggested that community-based workplace learning programs should be established to provide easy access for youth in their local areas, making internships more accessible to those who cannot travel to urban centers.

Guidance, supervision, and support during workplace learning

- In interviews with WPL beneficiaries and key informants revealed that guidance and supervision during internships are generally effective. WPL beneficiaries pointed out that they regularly had regular check-ins with their supervisors, who provided constructive feedback, helped them stay on track with assigned tasks, and ensured they gained meaningful experience. Supervisors were also reported to be approachable, willing to address interns' concerns, and provided valuable advice whenever challenges arose. This structured supervision helped interns understand their roles better, enhanced their skills, and fostered their professional growth. The beneficiaries said that they received continuous orientation on essential tasks, which contributed to their self-development. For instance, those working in the hospitality, manufacturing, and construction sectors reported significant skill improvement, including the ability to create desirable designs, meet customer needs, and develop marketing strategies.
- However, it was noted that not all interns experienced adequate guidance and support. Some WPL beneficiaries (6) stated that their supervisors did not provide enough assistance, leaving them to struggle with tasks and workplace challenges on their own. They faced difficulties adjusting to the fast-paced work environment, finding the workload overwhelming, especially when managing multiple tasks with tight deadlines. Others struggled with unfamiliar workplace tools and software, which required additional time to learn and adapt to.
- Beyond supervision, interns encountered other challenges that impacted their learning experiences. The high cost of living was another concern, with several interns struggling to cover transport, accommodation, and daily expenses. Additionally, those receiving transport facilitation from Rwanda Development Board (RDB) reported delays in payments, which further strained their ability to manage costs.
- Limited availability of internship opportunities also forced some interns to seek placements far from their homes, increasing their financial burden. Furthermore, some companies had limited resources to support interns with basic necessities such as food and water, while smaller companies often lacked sufficient activities to fully engage interns in productive learning.
- Despite these challenges, it was noted that institutions such as the Rwanda Technical and Vocational Education and Training Board (RTB) play a role in supporting companies in implementing the Workplace Learning Policy. Various forms of assistance are provided to employers depending on the type of workplace learning program.
- **Industrial-Based Training and Dual Training:** The government and other stakeholders supply necessary consumables for training and provide capacity-building programs for in-company instructors to enhance their ability to mentor interns effectively.
- **Industrial Attachment Program:** In this model, students are integrated into the company's workforce, allowing them to gain hands-on experience while contributing to production. Although financial incentives are not provided, employers benefit from capacity-building initiatives designed to improve their ability to guide and mentor students.

- These institutional support mechanisms are essential in ensuring the effectiveness of workplace learning and enhancing the ability of companies to accommodate interns. However, gaps remain in ensuring that all interns receive adequate supervision, financial support, and access to quality internship placements.

3.6. A SWOT analysis of career orientation and guidance programs in Rwanda's public and private institutions

A SWOT analysis of career orientation and guidance programs in Rwanda's public and private institutions was conducted to assess their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the external environment in which they operate. The analysis was based on both secondary data and primary data collected through desk review and key informant interviews respectively. The table below presents the key findings, highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to career orientation and guidance programs in Rwanda's public and private institutions.

SWOT Analysis of Career Orientation and Guidance Programs in Public and Private Institutions

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Availability of career advisory services in institutions, providing students with career guidance and counseling. • Presence of career and employability policies in public and some private institutions. • Growing recognition of the importance of career counseling, leading to increased efforts in career development. • Institutions offer internship/industrial attachment, enabling students to gain practical experience. • Government support for skills development among students in both public and private institutions. • Collaboration between academic institutions and the business community to facilitate student career development through internships and industrial attachments.	• Limited financial resources limit students from undertaking adequate internships or industrial attachments, leading to graduates lacking sufficient practical experience. • Lack of regular assessments or tracer studies to track graduate employment trends so as to improve academic and career guidance programs. • Limited financial resources result in inadequate career awareness events, such as industry visits. • Career guidance is not integrated into the curricula of institutions. • Limited access to professionals and career role models for mentorship.
Opportunities	Threats
• Increasing demand for skilled professionals in Rwanda's growing economy. • Potential partnerships between education academic institutions and industries to enhance career development programs through workplace learning. • Government policies that promote youth employment and skills development as well as workplace	• Potential gap between the skills acquired by graduates and the skills demanded by the job market. • Rapid technological advancement is an opportunity but can also pose a threat to career guidance programs, requiring continuous updates to align with evolving technology-oriented job market demands. • High unemployment rates can discourage students from actively engaging in career development activities, as job opportunities may seem uncertain. • Disparities between public and private institutions in terms of resources and career support services.

learning. • Technological advancements enable pre-service students to gain career insights from in-service counterparts through alumni networks, providing firsthand career information.	
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Strengths and Opportunities

Career orientation and guidance in public and private academic institutions in Rwanda benefit from can strengths and opportunities that enhance students' preparedness for the job market. The institutions have career advisory programs, offering students career guidance and counseling to help them navigate their professional paths. Public institutions and a few private ones have established careers and employability policies that outline strategies for supporting students' transition from education to employment. Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the importance of career counseling, leading to increased efforts to provide mentorship and career development support. The institutions also offer internship/ industrial attachment opportunities, enabling students to gain hands-on experience in their chosen fields. Furthermore, the government plays a supportive role by promoting skills development initiatives for students in both public and private institutions.

There is also collaboration between academic institutions and the business community, facilitating student career development through internships and industrial attachments. This collaboration ensures that students acquire relevant skills and industry exposure. In addition to these strengths, some opportunities exist to further enhance career orientation and guidance programs. Rwanda's growing economy has increased the demand for skilled professionals, making career guidance a crucial component of education. Technological advancements offer new opportunities for pre-service students to gain valuable career insights from their in-service counterparts through alumni networks, enabling them to access firsthand career information. Virtual platforms also facilitate interactions with professionals and mentors from diverse industries, broadening students' career perspectives and enhancing their preparedness for the job market. These digital solutions help bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world career expectations, ensuring students make informed career decisions.

Moreover, private and public academic institutions have the potential to establish strong partnerships with industries to enhance career development programs and workplace learning opportunities for students. These collaborations enable students to gain practical experience through internship and industrial attachment, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world job requirements. By working closely with industries, institutions can tailor their curricula to align with market demands, ensuring graduates acquire relevant skills.

Government policies that support youth employment, skills development, and workplace learning create a favorable environment for strengthening career guidance programs in academic public and private institutions. These policies encourage the integration of career guidance and counseling, vocational training, and hands-on learning opportunities, ensuring students are well-prepared for the job market. With government backing, institutions can strengthen career guidance programs aligning them with national workforce development goals and enhancing students' employability.

Weaknesses and Threats

Despite these strengths and opportunities, some weaknesses hinder the effectiveness of career orientation and guidance programs in Rwanda. One key limitation is that career guidance is not embedded within the curriculum, which means it lacks a structured framework in terms of allocated time and resources. As a result, students are not given adequate career orientation and guidance. Access to professionals and career role models remains limited, reducing opportunities for mentorship and career exploration.

Limited access to professionals and career role models hinders students' ability to receive mentorship and explore diverse career options. Without direct interaction with industry experts, students may struggle to gain insights into real-world job expectations, career progression, and the skills required in different fields. Mentorship plays a crucial role in guiding students by providing valuable advice, and inspiring them to set realistic goals. However, in the academic institutions lack structured programs connecting students with experienced professionals, limit them to build networks and gain exposure to various career opportunities. As a result, students may graduate with limited knowledge about potential career paths, reducing their confidence and readiness for the job market.

Furthermore, inadequate financial resources limit the organization of career awareness events, such as industry visits, career fairs, and mentorship programs. As a result, students have fewer opportunities to explore potential career paths, interact with professionals, and gain practical insights into various industries. This restricted exposure can hinder their ability to make informed career choices to develop the necessary skills for the job market.

The absence of regular assessments or tracer studies to monitor graduate employment trends limits the ability of academic institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of their career orientation and guidance as well as academic programs. Without this data, institutions cannot make informed improvements to align academic and career support services with labor market demands. This gap also makes it difficult to assess whether graduates are successfully transitioning into relevant careers or facing employment challenges that need to be addressed.

These weaknesses are further exacerbated by external threats that pose challenges to career orientation and workplace learning opportunities. High unemployment rates can demotivate students from actively participating in career development activities, as they may perceive limited job prospects regardless of their efforts. When students see a high number of graduates struggling to find employment, they may question the value of career planning and skill development initiatives. Additionally, the lack of immediate job openings may push some students to settle for careers outside their field of study.

Furthermore, disparities in resources and career support services between public and private institutions create unequal access to career development opportunities. Public institutions, often serving a larger student population, may struggle with limited funding and inadequate facilities for career guidance programs. In contrast, some well-funded private institutions can establish strong partnerships with employers and internship placements, giving their students a competitive advantage in career preparation. These disparities result in unequal exposure to career exploration activities, networking opportunities, and workplace learning experiences. As a result, students from resource-constrained institutions may face challenges in securing internships, accessing mentorship, and developing essential employability skills.

Rapid technological advancement presents both an opportunity and a challenge for career guidance programs. On one hand, emerging technologies create new career pathways and expand job opportunities. On the other hand, these advancements require career guidance programs to be continuously updated to align with evolving job market demands. Without regular revisions, career programs may become outdated, leaving students unprepared for technology-driven careers. Additionally, the fast-changing nature of technology increases the risk of skill mismatches, where students graduate with knowledge that is no longer relevant to industry needs.

It can therefore be concluded that while Rwanda has made significant progress in education development, particularly through policy frameworks that support skills development and workplace learning, enhancing the quality of career guidance services in both private and public institutions remains crucial. Strengthening these services will ensure that students make informed career decisions, engage in effective career planning, and contribute meaningfully to the workforce. Addressing the weaknesses and threats facing career orientation and guidance programs requires a collaborative effort from academic institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers.

Perceptions on the effectiveness of school-based learning in skill development

Interviews with WPL beneficiaries and WPL providers revealed that to some extent, students from technical and vocational schools acquire practical skills that make them job-ready. Workplace learning further enhances these hands-on skills, complementing the training received in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. However, students from general education schools are primarily equipped with theoretical knowledge, particularly in social sciences. While they may lack strong technical skills, they develop essential competencies such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, self-discipline, respect for managerial structures, and goal setting. WPL beneficiaries acknowledged that it helped them bridge the gap between theory and practice, allowing them to apply their skills in real work environments. Additionally, school-based learning provides foundational knowledge and concepts relevant to different fields, making it easier for students to grasp workplace tasks.

Employers' perspectives on the effectiveness of school-based learning suggest that while students gain relevant

knowledge and skills, they often lack experience. Students from technical secondary schools generally possess the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge but still require hands-on experience, which workplace learning provides. Conversely, students from general education backgrounds often do not acquire sufficient practical skills before entering the workforce. Their knowledge is largely theoretical, which may not always align with workplace demands. However, students from vocational institutions and technical secondary schools are better prepared with practical skills, though these are sometimes insufficient for immediate workplace adaptation.

Moreover, the study revealed that while Rwanda's national competency-based curriculum is designed to align with 21st-century job market demands, global competition and rapid technological advancements continue to influence workplace requirements. As a result, even students who have completed school-based learning may find themselves needing further upskilling to meet modern job expectations. Employers highlighted that both general education and technical school graduates have relevant knowledge, but in an evolving digital job market, low-skilled entry-level jobs are becoming scarce. Consequently, companies increasingly require interns who already possess a certain level of practical skills to quickly adapt to modern, technology-driven work environments.

It was further emphasized that employers today prefer skilled and adaptable interns who can quickly learn tasks with minimal supervision, particularly in a digitalized workplace. Many companies expect school leavers to have prior hands-on experience, enabling them to contribute productively during their internships. This underscores the need for stronger integration between school-based learning and workplace learning programs to ensure students acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical, job-ready skills before entering the workforce.

Specific skills gained from school that were most useful during internship

The assessment revealed that students found various skills gained from school to be particularly useful during their internships, with significant differences between general education and technical or vocational training.

Skills from General Education Schools

Participants from general education backgrounds highlighted several skills that played a crucial role during their workplace learning experiences. Among these were:

- **Time Management Skills:** These skills were essential for balancing multiple responsibilities, ensuring that tasks were completed on time, and managing priorities effectively. Time management, in particular, helped students juggle academic requirements and extracurricular activities, a skill that translated well into workplace efficiency.
- **Communication Skills:** Effective communication was one of the most frequently cited skills, enabling interns to interact professionally with supervisors, colleagues, and customers. This skill was particularly crucial in service-oriented industries, where clear and respectful communication impacts workplace relationships and customer satisfaction.
- **Teamwork Skills:** Many students found that their prior experience working in teams at school helped them collaborate effectively in the workplace. Whether working on projects, coordinating with colleagues, or supporting different departments, teamwork was essential for success.
- **Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking:** Classes that involved critical thinking exercises and problem-solving techniques prepared students to handle unexpected situations in the workplace. Many interns mentioned that these skills were useful in addressing customer or community complaints, troubleshooting workplace challenges, and adapting to new environments.
- **Customer Service Skills:** Those who studied social studies, arts, or business-related courses reported that their knowledge of customer service concepts helped them understand the importance of meeting client needs. This skill was particularly useful for interns in hospitality, retail, and administrative roles, where customer interactions are a central part of the job.

Specific Skills from Technical and Vocational Schools

Students from technical and vocational schools identified the following skills as being the most valuable during their internships:

- **Safety Awareness:** Interns in construction, manufacturing, and other technical fields found that understanding workplace safety rules was critical. Knowledge of health and safety protocols helped them avoid accidents and comply with workplace regulations.

- **Basic Technical Skills:** Those in vocational training acquired hands-on experience using tools, machinery, and hospitality equipment. These foundational skills enabled them to perform job-related tasks effectively and with minimal supervision.
- **Problem-Solving Abilities:** Interns learned to apply logical thinking when facing workplace challenges, allowing them to troubleshoot equipment issues, resolve minor technical problems, and improve efficiency.
- **Communication Skills:** Like their counterparts in general education, students in technical fields recognized the importance of clear communication with supervisors, colleagues, and customers, ensuring smooth workflow and effective collaboration.
- **Time Management:** The ability to complete assigned tasks efficiently and meet deadlines was particularly crucial for students working in fast-paced environments, such as construction sites, hotels, and workshops.

Section 4 :

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion

With the efforts of introducing workplace learning in Rwanda, WPL policy has been put in place to create an enabling environment providing strategic orientation of oriented skills development practices by institutionalizing the new concept of WPL programs in the Rwandan education and training system. As a result, the policy has been limited in generating a coordinated impact that is necessary to achieve the objectives for the workplace learning system due to the following issues: Weak institutionalization of workplace learning interventions, Non-harmonized incentives provided by various actors to companies participating in the implementation of workplace learning interventions, Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of the workplace learning interventions, Limited involvement of the private sector in the implementation of workplace learning interventions and Industrial attachment is constrained by the fixed school calendar and low participation of the private sector.

As implementation guidelines have been put in place to harmonize the existing institutional processes and systems as well as improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of WPL interventions by ensuring all synergies reflecting a widely collaborative partnership involving a diversity of organizations including the public sector, the private sector, development partners and civil society organizations for effective and efficient coordination of the WPL system.

As a result, the implementation of WPL Policy and its implementation guideline contributed to the improved system of skills development structures based on the demand in the labour market, accessible to an increasing number of youth, and able to create the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes among the Rwandan workforce. The synergies of different actors including Government Institutions, Private Institutions, Development Partners, and Civil Society Organizations played a tremendous role in country's economic and social development and to meet the country's competitiveness on the labour market demand with effective and sustainable employment ecosystem and decent work in Rwanda.

However, some challenges have been observed during the implementation of WPL interventions such as of harmonized WPL practices and lack of sustainable of financing and harmonised costing of incentives to companies involved WPL programs, Inadequate systematic teaching and assessment methods and procedures for dual training, limited knowledge about WPL. Proposed recommendations have been outline in this assessment report.

To end with, the assessment of employment impact of WPL Policy contributed a lot to connect skills providers with employment providers in a way that ensure development of market needed skills, & knowledge, including complementary attitudes that significantly contribute to scaling productivity, competitiveness as it has been revealed through key performance indicators in line with relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, employment impact and sustainability. By using educational innovative approach, or instructional methodology that applies workplace or real work to connect the students with school experiences to real-life work activities and future career

opportunities, the proportion of level students' satisfaction with acquired hands-on and quality to WPL package is very high to the planned targets.

The performance of the Workplace Learning (WPL) policy has been mixed, with notable progress alongside persistent challenges. While the introduction of implementation guidelines in 2021 has helped improve coordination and stakeholder engagement, gaps in awareness, governance, and financial support continue to hinder effective implementation. Many companies, particularly SMEs, struggle to integrate structured workplace learning due to limited capacity, weak collaboration with training institutions, and inadequate financial resources. Additionally, inconsistencies in recruitment processes, lack of formal workplace learning policies, and minimal private-sector engagement have created barriers to access and equity in workplace learning opportunities.

Despite these challenges, WPL remains a critical tool in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, enhancing youth employability. However, to maximize its impact, stronger policy enforcement, increased private-sector involvement, and sustainable funding mechanisms are needed. Addressing these gaps will be essential in ensuring that workplace learning effectively supports workforce development and contributes to national economic growth.

Recommendations

Level	Focus	Key findings	Actionable recommendations	Concerned institutions
At Policy level	Coordination of workplace learning	Weak collaboration between training institutions and companies in student placements	Establish formal MoUs between companies and training institutions to facilitate structured placements.	MIFOTRA, RDB, PSF-Rwanda, TVET Board
	National Skills Development Fund Strategy	Limited funding mechanisms to support skills development and workplace learning programs.	Develop and implement a National Skills Development Fund Strategy to finance workplace learning initiatives to ensure sustainability.	MIFOTRA, MINEDUC, RDB, Development Partners
At stakeholders' level	Advocacy and awareness raising	Limited awareness among private sector actors about workplace learning initiative and their role	Strengthen advocacy efforts through workshops, business forums, and media campaigns to enhance stakeholder awareness and participation	CSOs, MIFOTRA, RDB, PSF-Rwanda, Media Houses
	Private sector engagement	Many private informal and formal companies are unaware of the Workplace	Conduct awareness campaigns to inform both formal and informal private companies	MIFOTRA, CSOs PSF-Rwanda, RDB.

		Learning Policy.	about workplace learning	
	Support from NGOs, and development partners	Limited internship opportunities due to inadequate funding and partnerships.	Encourage NGOs and development partners to integrate workplace learning in their strategies.	NGOs, MIFOTRA Development Partners
At implementation level	Community-based workplace learning	Limited access to companies with workplace learning opportunities due to costs and logistical challenges.	Promote community-based workplace learning by engaging local companies to provide hands-on training for youth in their own communities.	MIFOTRA, Local Governments, RDB, PSF-Rwanda
	Provision of incentives to companies with long-term workplace learning opportunities	Many companies hesitate to provide long duration for workplace learning due to resource constraints.	Provide incentives such as consumables and subsidies to companies offering structured and long duration for workplace learning opportunities	MIFOTRA, RDB, PSF-Rwanda, MINICOM
	Expanding workplace learning opportunities	Demand for workplace learning exceeds available supply	Encourage more companies to provide workplace learning opportunities for youth	PSF-Rwanda, RDB, MIFOTRA

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