What Sh8b tourism varsity must achieve

Proposed institution has to create courses that respond to market needs to produce quality graduates

By OSPIN ASEMBO

The Government, through the Tourism Fund, is in the process of setting up a Sh8 billion ultra-modern tourism university at Vipingo, Kilifi County, that is to be completed within the next five years.

This is a welcome development in the hospitality and tourism industry, particularly as regards training. But what will the proposed Ronald Ngala University do differently from the many existing tourism schools?

We have at least one similar institution in each county, and almost all major universities in Kenya offer hospitality and tourism courses.

Ronald Ngala University, therefore, must create a niche for itself if it hopes to be relevant and compete with more established schools.

First, its courses must be standardised and meet the needs of the Kenyan market. It should avoid the approach that has been taken by the existing hospitality and training institutions of creating courses and programmes that are not market-driven.

Secondly, it needs to engage industry professionals in curriculum planning and development, and incorporate their views in their course programmes.

Ronald Ngala University should focus on a particular market need and tailor its graduates to excel in this area at work or in business.

A cost-benefit analysis should also be carried out for each programme to ensure that quality is achieved at an optimal cost.

Due to the dynamic nature of the industry, orthodox approaches to hospitality and tourism training will not work.

The university needs to ensure that it does not just train students for employment, but imparts entrepreneurial skills that will help them start new businesses and create job opportunities.

Strategic partnerships between the institution and stakeholders must also be enhanced through internship programmes.

But for this to work, the courses at any hospitality training institution must be relevant and help learners acquire knowledge, theories and practices, that the market requires.

I hope Ronald Ngala University will be known for its unique competencies.

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