

Diamonds aren't forever, but knowledge is...

A [1,758-carat-diamond](#) bigger than a tennis ball was recently mined in Botswana. Despite this, the resource-rich country knows that diamonds *don't* last forever... and when the resources run out, a diversified knowledge-based economy needs to be in place. And that's where corporate executive education could be a gem.



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The move for the Botswana economy from resources to knowledge is a considerable undertaking. A [knowledge economy](#) relies on knowledge to generate value, with a common emphasis on human-machine collaborations, high skill levels and information. Education is central to bringing this about, and Oneh Golding, country manager of [USB Executive Development \(USB-ED\) Botswana](#) – a leading corporate executive education provider across Africa – says corporate training is a big part of this.

She elaborates, “Diamonds and beef have, traditionally, been the cornerstones of Botswana’s economy. But what happens when these resources get ‘tapped out’? We must look ahead and make the change to empower a [new generation of knowledge workers](#).”

USB-ED has recently opened a Botswana office in Gaborone. It has been active in Botswana for 12 years and its sales consistently indicate an upward trajectory for corporate education in the country. This is a trend the company expects to grow, especially given the corporate and government agenda to push training across the spectrum to accelerate economic transformation.

Professional development empowers talent to bring scarce skills and innovation to office environments – and help self-starters to get their 'gigs' off the ground. Golding believes this is crucial due to Botswana's population, which is young and highly educated. "Our bright young minds are our most important resource and something we need to nurture."

Golding says that across USB-ED's corporate partners in the parastatal, financial, mining and government sectors, young leaders are pushing boundaries, challenging conventions, and hungry for scarce skills. "Innovation is top-of-mind for these leaders. They know a knowledge economy requires crucial 'human' soft and hard skills, like the ability to empathise, collaborate, and problem-solve. They're also committed to leading in a transformational way, with a skills- and development-centered approach."

Golding says personal mastery is a big part of executive education. This has the potential to change a person as an individual. An individual has capacity to change an organisation. And organisations, collectively, have the potential to shift Botswana into the future and the knowledge economy it needs to be.

Entrepreneurship is the other critical part of the knowledge economy of Botswana's future. "We want to give young people the best chance of leading – self, others, business and society. SMEs are pivotal and need to have every chance of sustained success."

Ultimately, it's going to take strong leadership for Botswana to take these next steps. As times change, and globalisation and digitisation become ever more ubiquitous, the country will be pushed to keep abreast with global, digital-age developments. With local and international competition driving progress, organisations will place great weight on talent management and succession planning, especially for key roles. Public-private partnerships that focus on education at all levels are pivotal to this.

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